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	Not even the most far-fetched of the inventions assisting the launch of Normandy forty years ago could match the fantastic sleight-of-hand devised by Robertus Volturnus in his book <i>De Re Militari Libri X</i> , reproduced from the catalogue of the exhibition <i>Architekt und Ingenieur: Baumeister in Krieg und Frieden</i> (415pp, DM30, 388pp, 0408) at the Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, until November 18.

Cover picture

The witch of Braemar Mansions

A. N. Wilson

HILARY SPURLING
Secrets of a Woman's Heart: The later life of I. Compton-Burnett 1920-1969
336pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £14.95.
0340262419

The last ace that Ivy Compton-Burnett ever created was not in the pages of her novels, but in the much more curious fiction which surrounded her person. She left a highly elaborate will, directing that almost every item of furniture from the notorious flat in Braemar Mansions be left to a separate friend or luminary from the London literary world. There was an inspired malice in the choice that determined which particular looking-glass or *objet* was left to which "friend" and it was further decreed that they should collect their trophy immediately after the funeral at Putney Vale crematorium. Thus Ivy Compton-Burnett guaranteed that even if they did not (as she had done herself several times during her last months) alight to their downfall on her as a person, they would, while clutching their bequest (in most cases a looking-glass) be sure to jostle one another in the corridors and impede one another's ascent and descent of the stairs. In this way, the final Braemar Gathering (as, among members of the circle, they were known) almost resembled one of those modernist theatrical productions in which the actors themselves work as stage hands and dismantle the scenery on stage at the end of the final act.

What sort of drama was it that had been enacted? "All Russians are brutal", Miss Compton-Burnett once remarked to her friend and fellow-novelist Elizabeth Taylor, "except Chekhov. People dislike his plays as they are all about nothing. I like them very much." People might say the same of the Compton-Burnett oeuvre, though they would be wrong. If anything, too much happens - incest, human sacrifice and suicide all tripped easily from her melodramatic pen - in the novels. But she was absolutely determined that nothing much should happen in her talk or in her life. There are many versions of the legendary occasion on which the editor of the *Times Literary Supplement* arranged for the Duchess of Buccleuch to meet the famous novelist. The Duchess was neither the first nor the last to discover that Miss Compton-Burnett had nothing to talk ab-

out except her window-box and her refrigerator. When she was reproached afterwards she shrugged and complained, "I wish people would tell me when they want me to be literary."

She was, of course, more literary than such stony encounters would suggest. She did read a certain amount, and she kept up with, while eschewing, the latest fashions in fiction and critical taste. But in spite of the fact that her conversation amused her friends as much as her lack of it intimidated her mere acquaintances, there is not much in the later life of Ivy Compton-Burnett for a biographer to make interesting; rather less, it might be thought, than there is in the lives of the characters of Chekhov. "My life was over when I was four. I wonder how many people can say that", remarks Pöbner Clare in *The Present and the Past*. If that was not entirely true of Ivy Compton-Burnett, she certainly liked to live as if experience was "over".

"People in life", she once remarked, "hardly seem definite enough to appear in print." It could never be said of her, who drew the outlines of her own mannerisms and eccentricities with such attention (the donning of the porkie hat and mackintosh to water the window-boxes; the striding across the park, complete with all the stage props of umbrella and hairnet, to have her daily greedy feast of buns at Buzzards in Oxford Street) that she was *indistinct*. But it could be said that she inhabited, like the saint in the poem, a world without event. You can make a funny essay out of Compton-Burnett anecdotes. You can tell again the tale of Frankie Birrell (or, if you prefer, Philip Toynbee, for the same story is told of him) coming to dinner with Miss Compton-Burnett and Miss Jourdain, somewhat drunk and waking up in the small hours to find his face in a plate of cold soup, the ladies having eaten their dinner and gone to bed without attempting to wake him or dislodge him. You can imagine, while Miss Jourdain's friends talked about books or furniture and her mousy little companion passed the radishes or the water-cress or the home-made gingerbread, that she was dreaming up the plots and exchanges of her frenziedly arch novels. "Spotless dullness is what Andrew and I are good at", as the heroine of *Brothers and Sisters* remarks. But it would take considerable imaginative panache to make all this into a book. Luckily for us, this is precisely the panache which Hilary Spurling possesses in such rich

abundance. She has made one of the most fascinating of modern biographies out of what must have been one of the most boring of all modern lives.

What gave Mrs Spurling's first volume *Ivy When Young* its thrilling plausibility is that she, like George Painter in his biography of Proust, managed to show conclusively that the nature of the novelist's subject is the very opposite of what we are meant to expect. Ivy Compton-Burnett can certainly be seen, and to some extent saw herself, as a "Freudian" novelist. Freud's picture of human memory coloured the vision of all his generation, and of succeeding generations - although, comparing him with other, roughly contemporaneous figures, we can see that like many insights of genius it came partly from himself and partly from something that was in the air at the time. Freud's "parapraxis" is obviously comparable to the effects, in the memory bank of Proust's narrator, of an uneven paving stone or a *madeleine* dipped in weak tea, but no one would dream of saying that Proust "got the idea" of *A la recherche du temps perdu* from Freud. Precisely how un-Freudian Proust was, indeed, is revealed in Painter's biography. Far from having the power of complete recall, Proust's memory was in fact outstandingly bad and in order to write these passages, for instance, in which he "remembered" the beauty of an apple blossom at Balbec, he had to be driven, at the appropriate season, to the Parisian suburbs to see the stuff, tearing back to the cork-lined bedroom to note his impressions before they faded. Anthony Powell, the novelist who has most successfully avoided imitating Proust by constructing a *Recherche* in which the narrator has no inner life at all (and hence, properly speaking, no memory), has said that Ivy Compton-Burnett "embodied in herself a quite unmodified pre-1914 personality", a remark which would surely have delighted her; and Hilary Spurling continues in this second volume, *Secrets of a Woman's Heart*, to expose the relentlessly *vous* nature of the Compton-Burnett cult of the past.

The cataclysm, long before this volume begins (with the publication of *Pastors and Masters* in 1925) has already happened. The hellish past had been put behind her; probably, one suspects, as so often with pain, completely forgotten. Just as her skirt-lengths, her diction, her hair and her sense of humour were "unmodified pre-1914" so she substituted fiction for memory. She had, for instance, or so

she would have wanted us to believe, been in love with her brother Noel. One of the greatest "blows" (hidden in the irrecoverable past of pre-memory) was his decision to marry, and another was his death in the trenches, which led to the unsuccessful suicide attempt of his wife. Ivy (who was to suffer the suicide of two of her own sisters) apparently nursed her brother Noel's wife for a year through the "nervous breakdown" which followed his death. Out of this experience, Mrs Spurling shows, grew the scene of Josephine nursing Gabriel's wife in *More Women than Men*: the half-murderous impulse which leads her to put the patient in an icy draught and the guilt and self-disgust which follow upon her death.

But where Mrs Spurling really shines is in showing that this is not, in fact, a memory at all. The scene is lifted, directly, from that haunting and much-neglected masterpiece of Somerville and Ross, *The Real Charlotte*. The heroine, Charlotte Mullen, does precisely what Josephine does in *More Women than Men*. Most of Ivy Compton-Burnett's early reviewers, Mrs Spurling informs us, noted that she lifted her plots wholesale from such trashy late-Victorian works as *East Lynne*, *The Wide World* or *Irene Iddesleigh* (due for a reprint?) and then imposed these plots upon her own "experience". The word demands quotation marks, for even so painstaking an investigator as Mrs Spurling cannot sort out what "really happened" in Ivy's past from what she thought happened or wanted to have happened. "Ivy When Young" might have gone through hell, but the dowdy, guzzling witch of Braemar Mansions, prosing coarsely on about refrigerators or the difficulty of getting servants, made her artistic reputation out of shaping other people's lives who owe their power to their Wildean lack of reality. Like her own invention Terence Calderon in *Elders and Betters*, she "on second glance presented a normal appearance". The rhetorical trick in the Compton-Burnett oeuvre is not to allow us a second glance, so that, as in a play by Wilde, we are so delighted by the verbal displays that we do not pause to consider the reality or otherwise of the mouthpiece who is giving them utterance. "We shall feel this house is our own when we have planted memories in it", says Benjamin in the same novel. The words might have been written up in letters of gold over the portals of Braemar Mansions.

The family which she chose to recreate in book after book - the intense, unhappy, aadis-

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The domestic scene

Linda Colley

ANTONIA FRASER
The Weaker Vessel: Woman's lot in
seventeenth-century England
544pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £12.95.
0297783815
MIRIAM SLATER
Family Life in the Seventeenth Century: The
Verneys of Claydon House
209pp. Reutledge and Kegan Paul. £10.50.
07100 9477 9
LINDA A. POLLOCK
Forgotten Children: Parent-child relations
from 1500 to 1900
334pp. Cambridge University Press. £25
(paperback, £9.50).
0521250099

When George Eliot wrote that the happiest women had no history, she was mocking by implication the view that courtship, marriage, children and domesticity were too mundane to merit scholarly attention. She herself recognized that it was their very mundaneness that made such experiences significant: a view that is new almost de rigueur among European and American historians. But while genuflecting at the altar of domestic history is easy, writing it is not. Reconstructing the past of the common man is hideously difficult; women and children – so often lost in history rather than the proverbial first – are even more intractable. They have usually been less visible than adult males, and much less able or willing to commit their story to paper. Nor are they convenient categories for historical study. Women are not a class; they are not a caste; they are not even – despite the impression given by most history books and almost all history faculties – a minority. So how does one write about them?

Thus far the tendency has been to opt for one of two approaches. Some writers take the great historical set-pieces – like the American Revolution – and stress their female dimension, an exercise that can be illuminating but can also slide very easily into wishful thinking. More frequently, it is assumed that women's common experience of menstruation, marriage, maternity and male domination allows them to be treated as a unified subgroup over time, an interpretation uncomfortably close to the notion that the history of women is little more than the history of the womb.

Antonia Fraser adopts the second, more conservative method in her splendid word-picture of seventeenth-century Englishwomen. She argues, rightly, that the period brought little durable economic, legal or medical advance for women. But the hiccup of the Civil War did offer partial liberation to some. Aristocratic heroines showed their mettle defend-

ing their husbands' property; women traders patrolled Parliament and raised money for its armies; most of all, religious radicalism – which has almost always paid more attention to women than political radicalism – gave the prophetesses their chance and the marriage reformers their slight opportunity. One wonders in this context whether the decline in Protestant zeal in the eighteenth century reduced the scope for female assertion. Cromwell's Calvinist granddaughter, Mrs Bendish, used to drive home alone from business or pleasure at 2 am, singing hymns in the certainty "that angels surrounded her chaise". In her case, they probably did.

It is vignettes like these which have aroused the ire of Lady Antonia's more purist critics. And it is true that – readable, well-illustrated and impressively researched as it is – the book concentrates on the picturesque rather than on the prosaic majority. We are given more on stray women philosophers and soldiers than on spinsters and middle-class wives. The poor old women accused of witchcraft are discussed; Keith Thomas's suggestion that old age may have increased the status of ordinary women is not. Fraser is also predisposed to happy endings and this can result in ever-rosier history. She describes the union between Sir Ralph Verney and Mary Blackall as being one of "remarkable happiness", a triumph of mutual love over the arranged marriage. So, to an extent, it was. But when Lady Verney left her husband in France to try and save his estate from sequestration (she was pregnant at the time), it was assumed by friends that he would spend his time whoring. And when, on her return from England, Mary sickened and was on her death-bed, Ralph's cousin sent him a new maid-servant "that will be as good as my lady in the dark... she will match your cock".

Fraser does not even refer to these episodes; but she should. The past is a foreign country, and that applies to the emotions as well. How far it also applies to the family has been hotly disputed. Thanks to the outstanding work of Peter Laslett, E.A. Wrigley and Roger Schofield, we now know a great deal about the demographic structure of the English family since the sixteenth century. But what is still not clear is how far family sentiment was determined by demographic flux. Some historians, led by Lawrence Stone, have argued that before 1700 high infantile mortality made parents circumspect about investing emotion in their children; that it was not until the eighteenth century that the affectionate, nuclear family became the norm among the affluent; and that among the poor, the family unit coalesced to be based more on cold economic necessity than on love. These conclusions – and I am obviously simplifying them – have been challenged

with some ferocity by Alnn Macfarlane, Keith Wrightson and Laslett himself. But the debate continues; and to prove it we have Miriam Slater's study of the Verney family (written under Stene's influence) and Linda Pollock's analysis of parent-child relations (with preface acknowledgments to Laslett, Wrightson and Macfarlane). The result in both books is a somewhat caricatured version of the dichotomy between their respective masters' voices.

Slater has employed the immensely rich Verney archive to lend precision to our understanding of seventeenth-century family life. Her book is lucidly written and the documents have been interpreted with intelligence and scholarly discrimination. The only real problem – which is crucial – is the Verneys themselves. No family is typical; but they were decidedly unusual. Of Sir Edmund Verney's twelve children, the remarkably high number of ten survived into adult life. When Sir Edmund was killed in battle in 1642 the estate devolved upon his eldest son Ralph. Since Ralph's mother was already dead, family life became a matter of relations between siblings, one of whom had been prematurely promoted to patriarch. The resulting squabbles were perhaps predictable, and the Civil War made things very much worse. It threatened the Verney estate; it drove Ralph and his wife into exile in France; and it undermined the dowries of Ralph's five unmarried sisters.

Slater shows – and it makes her reading – how the Verney brothers, and still more the Verney sisters, had to abase themselves to Ralph to win his favour and a share of his money. She shows, too, that Ralph's love for his siblings was strictly regulated by financial considerations. But given the unique pressures on the family and its patrimony, can we really conclude from this one case that in the seventeenth century in general "respect and submission to the parent was evoked by fear rather

than admiration and affection"? One may doubt it.

Pollock does not merely doubt it; she knows it's wrong. "Stone's dramatic and dogmatic synthesis has not one shred of sound logic and convincing evidence to support it." In a book distinguished by impressive application, vigorous expression and – as one may see – considerable confidence, she argues that chronology made little impact on family sentiment: "Parents have always tried to do what is best for their children, within the context of their culture." But there, as they say, is the rub. Given that crude theorizing about parental attitudes is precisely that, surely economic, demographic, cultural, political and social factors have made for some changes in family behaviour and attitudes over time? If one looks for example at the jacket illustration of Antonia Fraser's book, "The Saltonstall Family" (c1636), and then at the painting of the Shudi family (c1742) now on show at the Victoria and Albert's Rococo exhibition, it is clear that the difference between them is more than changing fashions in art. In the seventeenth-century painting the wife lies prone and passive, the dominant husband coolly rewarding her for his heir; the children are formal and are kept firmly to one side. But Mrs Shudi greets a grinning child in one large, capable hand while holding a newspaper in the other; her husband, sitting at her level, smiles in *déshabillé* and plays the harpsichord. To explain that transition requires subtlety; and subtlety together with historical sense are not – on the evidence of this book – Dr Pollock's forte.

"Birth, copulation and death", wrote another Eliot, "That's all the facts when you come to brass tacks". True enough; but the historian's business is to get beyond the repetition of these basic human facts to the men, women and children who experience them, and then to locate their experience in time.

tic mothers and elder sisters, the ineffectual clergymen and schoolmasters, the languid young cousins ("Well, a man is a man", said Mr. Bigwell. "That is rather sweeping", said Oliver, "I am not") – *Two Worlds and their Ways*, all inhabit the nightmare which she herself has painstakingly brought into existence. The fact that strangers at Braemar Gatherings sometimes had difficulty in distinguishing Miss Compton-Burnett from the more aggrieved or etiolated governesses of her own stories only emphasizes how completely the habits of distortion, affectation and creation were ingrained in her. One is struck repeatedly in the novels by the fact that all the grown-ups are infantile whereas all the children are parodies of nineteenth-century *gravitas*, like Mr Bultrude of *Vice Verso* imprisoned by magic in his son's Eton Collar and school uniform. The children, moreover, are much sager, and much more cynical, observers of depravity, like the Clare children at the beginning of *The Present and the Past* who watch the hens pecking the sick one to death. "Perhaps it is because they are anxious", said Megan, looking at the hens in the hope of discerning this feeling."

Mrs Spurling reveals, a trifle mercilessly, that if there were any "models" for the unpleasant Compton-Burnett "families" they were to be found not so much in the recesses of her memory as in the figures she collected or created at her famous tea-parties. But much more than any model from life, the books themselves are unrelentingly, archly, artificial, bookish and "made". As one very perceptive reader of *More Women than Men* observed when it was published, "Oscar Wilde is not so much borrowed from as contributed to." Or, as Ivy herself admitted in Spurling's first volume, "I do not claim that the children in my books, any more than their elders, resemble the actual creatures of real life."

If Wilde (contributed to or borrowed from) seems to hover about like one of the more

disconcerting maiden aunts in her novels, and if one of the eventually tiring things about her fantasy life is its tendency to relapse into epigram, it is the less genial figure of Samuel Butler who was Ivy's greatest inspiration or fairy godfather. Butler himself is another figure who can be easily associated – and not only in time – with Freud. *The Way of All Flesh* is a vulgar version of Freud's world-view, like the *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* rewritten for Punch; as it were, *Oedipus Simplex*. There can be no doubt that Butler hit the spot for many late-Victorian readers, in just the way that F. Anstey did, by constructing a drama in which the whole comedy depends on our shared hatred, not simply of Mr Pontifex, but of all fathers everywhere; and, come to that, all families. In her copy of Samuel Butler's *Notes*, given her in 1919 by Margaret Jourdain, Ivy Compton-Burnett underlined the phrase "so long living death-bed, so to speak of stagnation and nonentity" and added "I am a living witness of this crushing lifeless stagnation of the spirit" (sic).

The most impressive thing about Ivy Compton-Burnett, as revealed in Spurling's pages, is her unerring instinct to preserve this "lifeless stagnation" against all comers. After the dazzling success of *Brothers and Sisters*, we learn that there were attempts by the "literary world" to "take her up". Leonard Woolf, who had earlier turned down one of her books on the rather attractive grounds that she "couldn't even write", sent her invitations. Her instinct was to avoid Bloomsbury and the bright lights, and to "remain on her sofa most of the day writing with a pencil in a notebook".

Even if nothing odd will do long and it should transpire that Ivy Compton-Burnett's highly idiosyncratic and recognizable creations do not last, Mrs Spurling has guaranteed that their author will live on as a tragic-comic figure in her own right. This is a biography which will satisfy even those who enjoy the Compton-

Burnett beaks less wholeheartedly than Mrs Spurling does. There is a good anecdote on almost every page, and welcome and memorable exchanges with Rose Macnulty, Lettice Cooper, Robert Liddell, Elizabeth Taylor (the novelist, not the actress), Francis King, Kay Dick and others. Ivy's companion, for the greater part of her writing life, was the (in her day famous) historian of furniture Margaret Jourdain, and there is added comedy in the fact that the majority of distinguished callers at their flat, in the early days, regarded Ivy with distaste. Margaret herself pretended not to read the novels, or to think them "rubbish". All this, too, was an invaluable aid in creating the right background of dullness against which the exchanges and violent melodramas of her fiction could be surreptitiously embroidered. The effect of the whole story is more uncanny than anything Ivy Compton-Burnett ever dreamed up in her pages.

There is strong feeling in the electrically charged "atmospheres" and sharp intakes of breath among that fascinating category of person designated by Elizabeth Bowen, "old fashioned lesbians of the highest sort". One of the dons at Oxford labelled the novelist "poison Ivy" and it is not altogether difficult to see why. This donnish background itself provides a fascinating sub-plot to Ivy's middle years, for Miss Jourdain's sister, Miss Nelly Jourdain, was the most notorious college Principal of modern times.

Miss Jourdain's precipitate dismissal of Miss Ady as the history fellow of St Hugh's College, Oxford was an affair which, as the saying goes, blew up in Miss Jourdain's face. At that date, St Hugh's depended upon other colleges to supply its students with tuition. All the dons in the University sided with the wronged Miss Ady and withdrew their teaching until she was reinstated. Finally, in the last disgrace of all, Miss Ady received the support of the Chancellor of the University, Lord Curzon, and the

disgraced Nelly Jourdain died suddenly. Margaret and Ivy believed she had been murdered. The whole incident reveals the extraordinary extent to which life, even at one remove, had powerful artistic imagination, follows the patterns decreed by novelists. You might have thought, given her very happy experience of dons, that poor poison Ivy would have given them a wide berth as she grew older. Moreover, it might have been guessed, by someone who knew that Ivy had deeply felt of her companion, that she would have felt inconsolable when Margaret died. So indeed she did. Nevertheless, Margaret's death, Ivy wrote a letter to the Principal of Somerville College, asking that she could be supplied with "some don who is retiring, and does not want living expenses, a large scull" who could share the flat with her and she withdrew the request almost as soon as she had made it. Of course it reveals how lonely she was, and what a muddle her mind was thrown her into. But it also shows an absolute extraordinary arbitrariness in her attitudes selecting human companionship. Many would take more trouble about choosing a mate. The letter asking for a new maid-servant with whom to share her highly distinctive and of life revealed momentarily that flash of spired coolness, that combination of loneliness and total indifference which was the inspiration for her finest moments of fiction.

To mark the centenary of Ivy Compton-Burnett's birth on June 5 Gollancz are issuing a uniform collectors' edition of her novels, at either £5.95 or £6.95 each. *More Women than Men* (£2.95), *Brothers and Sisters* (£1.95), *Brothers and Sisters* (£2.95) have recently been reissued in paperback by Allison and Busby. Twelve of the novels are now available in paperback, published by Penguin, Allison Busby or Oxford University Press.

Dear bubbling Desmond

Hermione Lee

DAVID CECIL (Editor)
Desmond MacCarthy: The man and his writings
313pp. Constable. £9.95.
009465610X

"He was a supremely good talker... In a charming, expressive voice, male and unmanured but beautifully modulated to convey his ever-changing shades of feeling, his discourse flowed forth, relaxed, leisurely, entralling" (David Cecil). "He moved through the great houses bestowing the blessings of his wit and the grace of his conversation" (Leon Edel). "He spoke to everyone as if they were all his lifelong guests at some delicious party" (Cyril Connolly). "No one in London was more widely and more wholeheartedly liked. He was adored by persons who detested one another" (Raymond Mortimer).

There is something about the tone of these unanimous tributes which makes the haekles rise. It's partly their blithe assumption that good dinner-party chat must universally be regarded as the acme of civilization – the superficial branch, as it were, of the Cambridge/Bloomsbury/G. E. Moore nexus of beliefs ("Personal affections and aesthetic enjoyments include... by far the greatest goods we can imagine"); and partly that when someone is praised as a brilliant talker one instantly suspects them of being an insufferable phoney.

MacCarthy's much-indulged insufferableness was, in fact, very well documented: his fecklessness, his laziness, his inability to get out of bed in the morning or get into it at night when his hosts wanted to go to sleep, his chronic eleven-hourism over dates, deadlines, trains, lunches, appointments, his constant self-reproaches on all these counts, his growing gloom at not having written his great novel or fulfilled his early promise – the Desmond stories are legion. Did you hear the one Morgan tells about Desmond reading a brilliant essay to the Bloomsbury Memoir Club from what turned out to be a blank sheet of paper? Did

Virginia ever tell you about the dinner party they gave (Roger was there too) with Leonard's secretary hidden behind a screen to write down Desmond's conversational pearls, and how she came out with oodles much written down at all? Have you heard about Lady Colefax's scheme to raise £300 for Desmond and Molly's debts? So the "table talk" echoes on, and a sense of character remains, most brilliantly (and repeatedly) set down in Virginia Woolf's diaries, where she is sketching him for Bernard in *The Waves*.

May 7 1918. His mind had a fastidious spryness about it... but this wore off, and he yawned, & couldn't stir himself up... Late at night he took to reading Joyce's *Ulysses*, & in particular to imitating his modern imitation of a cat's miaow, but I went to bed, & though capable of spending a night in this manner, I had compassion, & desecrated Desmond's upstairs, collecting books as he went. Next morning, having observed that breakfast at 8.30 would possibly be early enough, he stayed talking about books till 10 & rambled off quite out of tune for his office.

June 5 1925. He is like a wave that never breaks, but lollsops one this way & that way & the sea hangs on ones mast & the sun beats down.

March 22 1928. Desmond comes in, round as a billiard ball, & this is true of his dear bubbling (say) mind; which has such a glitter & lustre now from more being at ease in the world that it puts me into a good temper to be with him. He describes, analyses, narrates; does not actually talk.

But for all his bubbling inconclusiveness, and his disappointment in his own career (touchingly displayed here in a rueful letter written at fifty-four, in 1931, to his younger self), the literary journalism that came out of his years as literary editor (the "Affable Hawk") of the *New Statesman*, editor of *Life and Letters* and literary critic of the *Sunday Times* is rich and impressive. One's suspicion that he might be bland and superficial, a Bloomsburian Andrew Lang, which the clubbish establishment tone of David Cecil's introduction to this volume does nothing to allay, is only occasionally borne out. There is a stuffy, uncomprehending put-down of Gertrude Stein, comparing her "jabbering nonsense" to the "intimate pitch-dark rhapsodies" of Mr Joyce or the incomprehensibility of Mr Eliot. MacCarthy was no Edmund Wilson, and his

sympathies with modernism – as with feminism – are limited (as Virginia Woolf found them when he "sneered" at Mrs Dalloway or derided women for their "Intellectual Inferiority"). And there are patches of vapid writing, as here, on Hardy: "There are green isles of peace and happiness in his stories, but a greyness beats upon them and the ominous murmur of it is heard in their most sheltered recesses." But none of this matters very much when set against MacCarthy's best work.

He was a first-rate drama critic, and writes perceptively about Ibsen, Shaw, Strindberg and Chekhov (a piece which pleasurably illustrates the English 1920s passion for all things Russian). He has a very acute sense of why certain writers matter to certain generations of readers (it is a pity, for this reason, that the pieces in this collection aren't dated). Meredith appealed at the turn of the century because he was the first truly post-Darwinian Victorian poet "to assimilate into his poetic conception of the world the idea that death and battle is the law under which all living things exist and come to their proper perfection". Samuel Butler's ironic, sceptical, hedonistic recognition of the necessity for compromise make him a crucial influence on MacCarthy's generation. Kipling was loved in the 1890s not just for being "the bard of the British Empire" but because "he idealized for an anonymous variety of man their relation to their work". MacCarthy is witty about changing fads in taste (like the use of the words "amusing" and "genious" in art criticism; relics of an unconscious Ruskinianism) and is himself a shrewd barometer.

One of the attractions of the volume is that MacCarthy's moral sympathies and emotional predilections are candidly displayed. There is an interesting essay on Leslie Stephen, not included here, which quotes him as saying: "I have been too much of a Jack-of-all-trades." Though MacCarthy makes heroes out of men who work to their utmost and stick to their beliefs (Conrad, James, Goethe), his natural bias is always towards idiosyncratic, self-doubting figures like himself. His way of bringing a character to life is always to dwell on his

(and it is usually his) moments of doubt. Prolong little Bilham to Henry James's *Lady Strether*, he recalls him bursting out at lunch: "Yes... [writing] is solitude, it is a gleam of self disclosure" referring to his defeat at "his wound". He writes with a passioned interest about the paradoxical Oedipal character (especially on "the female libellous system" in relationships "as well as the hecane male adept"), or about Boswell's conscious contradictory impulses, or Darwin's outrageous slights-of-hand, or Strindberg's violent quarrels with himself. With his taste for intimate anecdotes, he catches his subjects when they reveal themselves most accurately. Here is Henry James, for example, at his word rounds:

I was amazed... by his standard of decency, and his remark on our leaving what appeared to be a thoroughly well-appointed, prosperous "room" "Poor S., poor S. – this stamp of unmistakable poverty upon everything!" has remained in my mind... "I can stand", he once said to me, while we were waiting for our hostess in an exceptionally plain and splendid drawing-room, "a great deal of poverty."

This shows a nice talent for a succinct mockery. I liked, too, Beerbohm's letter to the would-be biographer ("My gifts are small, I've used them very well, and discreetly, by straining them; and the result is that I'm now a charming little reputation. But that reputation is a frail plant. Don't over-attend to it. Gardener Lynch!") and Herbert Spencer making a joke on the Isle of Wight "... on a holiday there with O. H. Lewes... at lunch he remarked that the cheques were very low for so small an island." The jokes are good. MacCarthy's great talent, which is for the pathetic, informed, sensitive penetration of literary character. Why do people find him so after their deaths, he asks himself in the essay on Disraeli? "The idea occurred to me that it was not in proportion to the importance of either of a man's deeds or his books that he became the object of it, but rather according to the degree in which he appealed himself to the imaginations of those who live after him." It is humane thought, and might serve as a warning to biographers.

Listen to the leaders

Alun Howkins

ANTHONY SELDON and JOANNA PAPFORTH
By Word of Mouth: "Elite" oral history
258pp. Methuen. £11.95 (paperback, £5.95).
0416330207

Few Western European historians of élites have made systematic and rigorous use of oral history. These who have used it have tended by and large to stress not only its importance as a method but its uniqueness as a source for the history of the poor – those about whom the documents say little or nothing. There are exceptions, for instance Thad Thompson's work on the childhood of the upper bourgeoisie and aristocracy, but outside the United States, these are few and far between.

For this reason the present book should have been welcome as a corrective and to challenge the preconceptions of those who see oral history as being the property of the poor. Sadly this is not the case. The authors state that *By Word of Mouth* is aimed "primarily at the new wave to oral history; and it deals with the theory and practice of interviewing the leaders... rather than the led." It thus belongs with books like Roderick Floud's excellent *Introduction to Quantitative Methods for Historians* as a guide to research methods. This would be fine if the material it contained were not easily and cheaply available elsewhere. For instance,

much of what is provided here on the history, theory and methodology of oral history has been in print in a more interesting and comprehensive form for more than five years in Paul Thompson's *The Voice of the Past*. Similarly, Margaret Brooks's admirable chapter on methodology for oral archivists, though written from her enormous experience in the field, is largely available elsewhere, and offers a counsel of excellence in terms of equipment and skill which would preclude all but the most wealthy postgraduate departments.

What we have in *By Word of Mouth* are the opinions of some 200 historians, most of them historians of élites, on the validity or otherwise of the oral method. A large proportion of them have made no attempt themselves at sustained or organized oral history. Stephan Koss, for instance, concludes on the basis of about twenty interviews for two separate books that several of his interviewees "resisted hard evidence" and that he "rarely" found the experience of interviewing as "instructive as I would hope". Since we are told nothing about his methods or subjects it is difficult to know how much weight to give this statement. Remarkably, only 40 per cent of the historians concerned used a tape-recorder; the instant and meticulous writing-up of interviews was a necessity for Beatrice Webb but this is so long usually the case, and to deny posterity the kind of information a tape-recorder can provide seems quite wrong.

June Books

Non-Fiction

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Photographed by Colin Jones

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Hilary Spurling

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Hodder & Stoughton

Across the frontiers

John Willett

JELENA HAHL-KOCH (Editor)
Arnold Schoenberg, Wassily Kandinsky:
Letters, pictures and documents
Translated by John C. Crawford
221pp. Faber. £20 (paperback, £9.95).
0571 130607

VIVIAN ENDICOTT BARNETT
Kandinsky at the Guggenheim
311pp, with colour and black-and-white
illustrations. Abbeville Press, available from
Paedemic Ltd, 71 Great Russell St, London
WC1E 2ES.
089659 3983

The pioneers of the Modern movement were by no means so bohemian or informed as we now tend to think. Kandinsky, so Jelena Hahl-Koch tells us, had only one friend whom he addressed with the familiar *Du*, and it was not Schoenberg, even though the composer was eight years his junior. On the contrary, he wrote to him like this:

Dear Professor,

It gives me very special pleasure to send you a photo of myself. Would you like to give me the same pleasure by sending me a photo of yourself?

The story of this stately relationship begins in January 1911, when Kandinsky and his painter friends heard Schoenberg's Second String Quartet and the Three Piano Pieces, Opus 11, at a Munich recital and Kandinsky

wrote the composer an enthusiastic letter. It ends effectively with the outbreak of the First World War, just when Kandinsky, Schoenberg and their respective families, after pedantically elaborate arrangements, had at last managed to holiday in mutual proximity at Murnau in Bavaria. From then on everything was disrupted, and although there are drafts and drafts of contact and correspondence following Kandinsky's return from Russia in 1922 their earlier alliance was never renewed. Primarily this appears to have been due to Alma Mahler, who in 1923 told Schoenberg that Kandinsky and his new wife were blaming the excesses of Bolshievism on the Jews. The relevant letters are almost the last in this book, and they are painful to read; the episode itself, however, really demands further clarification.

But from 1911 to 1914 both men felt themselves to be caught up in startling new developments that involved more than one art. Schoenberg had begun painting in 1906, and kept it up for six or seven years. In 1911 he published the *Harnonielehre*, his principal theoretical work, while Kandinsky completed *Über das Geistige in der Kunst*, a title long rendered as *The Art of Spiritual Harmony*. Then in 1912 Schoenberg composed *Pierrot lunaire*, and meanwhile his often creepy, if amateurish, paintings so impressed Kandinsky that the latter included reproductions in his *Der Blaue Reiter* almanac and showed them in the first exhibition under that name. For not only was Kandinsky himself a late beginner as a professional artist, with a much wider back-

ground than his colleagues, but like Schoenberg he was open to the synaesthetic mysticism that had emerged from the Symbolist movement of the turn of the century. At a time when Skriabin, Matyushin and Rudolf Steiner in their varying ways were blurring the frontiers between the different arts, both men alike seemed to be searching for some absolute structural principle that would be common to the *Geist* – a word that is normally rendered "spirit" but also embraces the mind and even, like the French *esprit*, the wit – which can be realized in art as such.

Since their actual correspondence only occupies about a third of the book, the rest is filled out with a selection of mainly dramatic texts by them and useful essays by the editor and translators. Centring on the librettos of Schoenberg's opera *Die glückliche Hand* and Kandinsky's "stage composition" *Der gelbe Klang*, this material suggests that the common ground which they shared during those three-and-a-half years was not so much painting, which Schoenberg was about to abandon, as the new electrically lit poetic theatre, whose synaesthetic possibilities fascinated them both. Though the pioneers here had certainly been Wagner and his would-be interpreter Adolphe Appia, with his stylized, simplified conceptions of the former's *Gesamtkunstwerk*, these were not the immediate influence. Kokoschka's *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen* had been performed in Vienna in 1909, and whether or not Schoenberg actually saw it, it displays a clear family relationship to *Die glückliche Hand*, borne out

by the fact that Schoenberg wanted Kokoschka as his opera's designer. Even stronger perhaps was the example of Maeterlinck, whose plays, with their abstract settings and depersonalized characters (as in the extraordinary *Becket, oder Der Avergletscher*), were known to both men. Pointing forward to German Expressionism, this lush Symbolist stage was the experimental platform on which the two seekers met.

The Guggenheim Museum's new Kandinsky catalogue is necessarily less concerned with this short but crucial period of uncertainty and exploration than with the artist's steady development of an entirely abstract visual language. This can be traced here chronologically through the more than 200 of his works brought over the decades by the Guggenheim and their adviser Hilla von Rebay; all of these are competently documented and illustrated either in colour or in black- (or more precisely dark grey-) and-white. The result, with its accompanying exhibition list, bibliography and detailed chronology, makes a valuable reference work, though one that lacks the tension and close concentration of Arnold Schoenberg's *Wassily Kandinsky*. This is partly because the rather simpler quest which it follows has now grown so familiar, and partly because the assumptions on which it is based have become open to doubt, as can be seen from the very first sentence of the editor's introduction:

"During the first decades of the twentieth century, the direction of painting moved irresistibly toward abstraction." Irrevocably? Only in the most literal sense. Irreversibly? No.

illuminate it. A case in point is the question of Klee's contact with Hermann Rupp's collection of Cubist works, which, according to secondary sources, he had seen in Bonn in the summer of 1913. Jordan makes no attempt to sift the evidence for this link, which he refers to alternately as a possibility, a probability and a fact. Once, indeed, the very works by Klee to be explained by this contact are adduced as evidence of it (p 90). At other points, too, one looks in vain for a critical assessment of the historical links between Klee and Cubism, and all too often apparent similarities are vaguely presented as being either influences or,

perhaps, parallels. That either is likely to be true is no news and hardly worth presenting as a scholarly result.

It seems that current research on the pioneer has entered a phase where evidence prevails over empiricism, interpretation over documentation. The oeuvre of the major masters are becoming to art history roughly as the canonical gospels used to be for theologians: a Qumran discovery, or, failing that, most research on the so-called minor figures of the modern movement.

The formal climber

Sixten Ringbom

JIM M. JORDAN
Paul Klee and Cubism
233pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press.
£50.80.
0691 040257

Paul Klee himself acknowledged his debt to the French Cubists, and from about 1912 there are distinct echoes from Braque, Picasso, Gris and Delaunay in his work. Although an interesting one, the subject seems a little restricted for full-length treatment, and the ample space afforded by a 200 page volume has tempted the author to conduct his argument at a leisurely pace that will exasperate more impatient readers. Still, with a suitably liberal approach the subject might, after all, have been well served; but Jim M. Jordan has chosen a different method, which he states a little belatedly on the last-but-one page of *Paul Klee and Cubism*: "The method of this study has been predominantly un-icoographic." He asks us to accept "that the formal-analytical method works well with Klee", better, indeed, than with such artists as Franz Marc, Chagall, Kandinsky and Mondrian, with whom "the two aspects of form and content cannot be pulled apart, even provisionally, as well and profitably as they can be with Klee". This is an astonishing thing to

claim about an artist who was so extremely sensitive to the modal and associative values of line, texture, calligraphy and other components of style. The contents of Klee's images, whether serious, ironical, scurrilous or otherwise, are always loxtrically woven into the form that conveys the meaning; and an examination of his style without due regard to his subject-matter will inevitably remain a rather arid analytical exercise.

The narrowness of both theme and approach has also led Jordan to draw debatable conclusions about Klee's attitude to his Cubist sources. He is represented as a shrewd climber, ready to touch his colleagues for useful "influences". "It is certain", Jordan writes, "that Klee was much more patient and experienced than his friends [Marc and Macke] in the business of drawing profitably on artistic influences." Even a cursory glance into Glessamer's edition of Klee's drawings should be enough to convince us that the artist's development was a more complex process than Jordan would have us believe. All this talk about the "business" of profit from influences is simplistic and fails to appreciate, among other things, the fundamental alveity of Klee's reaction to his sources.

Soma of Jordan's formal derivations are so complicated, hypothetical and full of qualifications as to cloud the issue at hand rather than

Label into slogan

Frances Spalding

MARIT WERENSKIÖLD
The Concept of Expressionism: Origin and metamorphoses
251pp. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget. Distributed by Global Book Resources, 109 Great Russell Street, London WC1.
£20.00/£6.50

The term "expressionism" was first used of a movement in art at the Berliner Sezession in 1911, where it applied to young Parisian artists, a mixture of ex-Fauves and Cubists. The year before, it had been rejected by Roger Fry in favour of "post-Impressionism", though it had been employed by both him and Arthur Clutton-Brock in the British press. For a period "expressionism" was synonymous with "post-Impressionism" in Anglo-American art terminology. Marit Werenkiöld points out that Fry's interpretation of the new art movement bore striking similarities to the arguments put forward by Matisse in his "Notes d'un peintre" (1908). For Matisse expression in art was both formal and emotional: the communication of the painter's feelings through a decorative arrangement of the various elements. Until 1914 the concept of expressionism was widely associated with the calm, joyousness of Matisse's art.

After 1914 its meaning altered. Expressionism came to be seen as a specifically German phenomenon, an art deformed and disharmonic, a protest against the materialism of modern society and a rebirth of the metaphysical. Between 1914 and 1918 "Expressionismus" became a cultural slogan in Germany, embracing artists, writers and musicians. Werenkiöld analyses the shifts in meaning to every publication of the term and argues that Paul Feh-

ter's *Der Expressionismus*, published in 1914, began the "Germanization" of the concept, which was furthered by the rise of nationalism and the anti-French feeling that prevailed after the German defeat in 1918. In 1925 the "Neue Sochlichkeit" exhibition in Mannheim marked the conclusion of the "Expressionismus" in Germany. Ironically, it was as a loan-word from Germany that "expressionism" was first introduced into the French language in 1901. It was identified with German national culture and, owing to tense political relations, was regarded with widespread aversion.

Werenkiöld reminds us that the interest in expressionism, which today is international, commenced with the collapse of Hitler's Germany, for under the Nazi régime "Expressionismus" was a term of abuse, used to black-list not just artists but dealers, critics and historians who had given the movement their support. With the reaction that set in after 1945, expressionism once again became virtually the official form of German art, a symbol of the democratic and humanistic values of Hitler's dictatorship had obscured.

Werenkiöld's narrow investigation of a slogan concept has broad and important implications. Research of this kind weighs against the imprecise use of stylistic labels, divorced from their historical context; it also shows how ideas travel, and how politics and nationalism shape their course.

Picture Postcard Artists by Tonle and Vane Holt (106pp. Longman. £7.50. 0 582 50181 5) reminds us that each postcard "represents" a watercolour original in its own right. Donald McGill, for example, produced 10,000 of them. Each of the book's three sections – landscapes, animals and characters – includes illustrations and brief biographies of

Abnormal institutions

Vernon Bogdanor

AREND LIJPHART
Democracies: Patterns of majoritarian and consensus government in twenty-one countries
229pp. Yale University Press. £17.50 (paperback, £4.95).
0300 031157

Sir Henry Maine, one of the earliest students of the working of popular government, believed that democracy was "of all kinds of government, by far the most difficult", since "the perpetual change which, as understood in modern times, it appears to demand, is not in harmony with the normal forces ruling human nature, and is apt therefore to lead to cruel disappointment or serious disaster".

Maine has proved extraordinarily prescient. For democracies are, and always have been, in minority among the nations of the world. Of over 150 member states of the United Nations at the beginning of the 1980s, only about a third could be identified as democracies. Since then, the number has been further reduced by the abandonment of representative institutions in countries such as Nigeria and Somalia. The twentieth century is indeed the age of democratic rhetoric not democratic practice. For some thirty countries hold elections in which only one candidate, chosen by the ruling party, is allowed to stand for office; imitation, like hypocrisy, being the tribute vice pays to virtue.

Arend Lijphart, a Dutch political scientist who now teaches at the University of California in San Diego, is among the most inventive of those who have contributed to our understanding of the nature of democratic government. He has always been especially sensitive to alternative methods of securing democratic objectives, and is best known for his explication of "consociational democracy", a method of containing conflict quite different from that preferred by the Westminster model. In deeply divided societies, untrammelled majority rule of the kind favoured in countries such as Britain and New Zealand is a recipe for disruption.

As the experience of Northern Ireland has so clearly shown, such societies must be governed by concurrent majorities so that the interests of each of the major segments of opinion will be taken account of by every government, whatever its political colour. Such a method of government was, according to Lijphart, characteristic of the Netherlands for fifty years after the *Pacification* of 1917, and has been attempted also, with varying degrees of success, in Switzerland, Austria, Belgium, the Lebanon and Canada. Lijphart's earlier books, *The Politics of Accommodation* (1968) and *Democracy in Plural Societies* (1977), remain among the best analyses of democratic structures which differ very markedly from those within the Anglo-American tradition.

Democracies is an attempt to generalize from Lijphart's earlier work by distinguishing two contrasting models of democracy: the majoritarian and the consensual. The majoritarian model, exemplified most clearly by New Zealand and, to a slightly lesser extent, by Britain, is characterized by the absence of restraints upon majority rule. Neither country has a written constitution, and in both of them executive power is concentrated in a cabinet which dominates the legislature. The parliamentary arena has generally been dominated by only two major parties and the plurality electoral system – commonly if inaccurately known as "first past the post" – sustains a structure of duopolistic competition.

The alternative, consensus model is exemplified by Switzerland, where there are no less than eight majority-restraining elements. There is a written constitution and a federal system of government: executive power, far from being concentrated, is shared between the major parties, who join together in a perpetual coalition; the executive is independent of the legislature, which is strongly bicameral, so ensuring minority representation; and the proportional electoral system allows multi-party conflict to be structured along a number of different dimensions – linguistic and religious as well as socio-economic.

The central purpose of *Democracies* is to

provide a systematic comparison of the two models which Lijphart regards as basic. The two types of democracy are logically coherent, but to what extent are they also empirically relevant; to what extent do the various characteristics of majoritarian and consensual democracy cohere in actual political systems?

In fact, of the twenty-one countries surveyed by Lijphart, only four fit quite unambiguously into one or other of the two models – Britain and New Zealand into the majoritarian and Switzerland and Belgium into the consensus model. Even when two intermediate categories are introduced – "majoritarian-federal" to take account of countries such as the United States and Canada, and "consensual-unitary" to embrace countries such as Denmark and Israel – Lijphart still finds that only ten countries clearly belong to one of the four types. It must, therefore, be highly questionable whether he has succeeded in isolating the "basic models" of democracy; and, given the skill with which Lijphart systematically compares different institutional structures, one is bound to ask whether the enterprise upon which he is engaged is a viable one. If the naturalistic approach of the political scientist proves so unfruitful in the hands of so able a practitioner, might it not be the method rather than the man that is at fault?

To analyse institutions as if they were merely empirical entities is unlikely to advance our understanding of government very far. For structures of government are not to be conceived as attempts to provide answers to a common set of problems. The "problems" which political institutions seek to "resolve" are posed in quite different ways in countries with different cultural traditions, so that understanding the working of such institutions ("those spiritual things that we call 'institutions'", in Maitland's words) must inevitably involve some conceptual element. All too frequently the taxonomic approach exemplified by *Democracies* misses out what is most important about particular institutions. For example, Lijphart characterizes the "presidential" regimes, the United States, Fifth Republic

France and Finland. He is aware, of course, of the marked differences between these three systems, but still believes that something is to be gained by categorizing them together.

An alternative view, however, would suggest that the contrasts between the three systems are more important than the similarities because they express differences in the constitutional assumptions held in the countries concerned. The role of the American president is fundamentally constrained by the need to secure consensus in a country so vast and ethnically diverse as the United States. In France, on the other hand, the power of the president reflects an entirely different philosophy, the triumph of the Gaullist view of government; while in Finland, presidential power is largely a post-war phenomenon, a product of Finland's exposed international position, and also, perhaps, of the personalities of Paasikivi and Kekkonen. Little is to be gained by classifying such different systems together and attempting, by statistical analysis, to derive meaningful conclusions about the nature of democracy.

At best, the method adopted by Lijphart is likely to lend only to the discovery of interesting statistical correlations. He shows, for example, that most plural (ie, divided) societies are consensual, the exceptions being Luxembourg and Israel, and that the only non-plural societies which are consensual are Australia and Japan; he shows that Britain is the only country out of the six democracies with a population of over ten million to adhere to the majoritarian model. But these correlations tell us comparatively little about the forces at work sustaining or undermining particular systems. For that, an entirely different type of enquiry would be needed, one which attempted to grasp the nature of each political system through understanding its history and the ideological assumptions upon which it is based. Only when that is done, will it be possible to discover why it is that different countries have different types of democratic regimes, and whether any meaningful generalizations can be drawn.

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Meat for money in the murky market

Peter Kemp

PAUL THEROUX
Doctor Slaughter
137pp. Hamish Hamilton. £6.95.
0241 12559

The heroine of Paul Theroux's *The Picture Palace* was elderly and ailing, indifferent to her world-wide reputation as a photographer, happily addicted to junk foods, a plain near-virgin whose personal handicaps spurred her into creative achievement. Moving as far to the opposite extreme as possible, Theroux places at the centre of his new novel, *Doctor Slaughter*, a character who is the antithesis of all this. Young and pulsing with animal energy, obsessed by wealth and success, fanatically finicky about her food, Lauren Slaughter is attractive and promiscuous, trading on her physique in a way that relentlessly cheapens her.

An American research student with a masters in Economics and a doctorate in International Studies, Lauren has initially come to London to work in an establishment monitoring global trends, The Hemisphere Institute. Its emblem, however — an "embossed hemisphere — the world in gold" — epitomizes the sphere she's really drawn to: the world of the affluent and influential, to which, as someone who finds money "incredibly exciting", she avidly seeks entry.

While financially at a low ebb, Lauren keeps herself physically in prime condition with showers four times a day, yoga, jogging, exercise, and a refusal to let her metabolism be stilled or dulled by the intake of meat, salt, white sugar, milk, cream or preservatives. All her energies are invested in ensuring that her great asset, her body, will be at its peak should an opportunity for cashing in on it arise. One does so after she meets a South African banker, Van Arkady. At an Institute dinner party, as he "lifts his knife and worked it through the fist of meat bleeding on his plate", he curtly voices his belief that, when it comes to those

who count, there are only "five thousand people in the world". This brusque assertion of the existence of a cash-and-charisma elite sharpens Lauren's eagerness to become part of it. An invitation, via Van Arkady, to work for a high-income prostitution ring, The Jasmine Agency, apparently indicates a way in which she might do so.

It's a profession, Lauren discovers, for which not only her physical resources but also her grounding in economics and international studies usefully qualifies her. Becoming intimately familiar with market trends and involved with a very cosmopolitan clientele, she finds herself embroiled in a way of life that often oddly parallels her researches for the Institute. By day, she works on a project to do with "Recycling Oil Revenue": at the Agency, by night, she taps surplus funds from Arabs bursting with oil money.

With all the flair for witty, exuberant, graphic and chilly treatment of commercial sex that he put to such effective use in *Sahel Jack*, Theroux chronicles Lauren's new career. As it progresses, she is shown — in a sequence of, so to speak, tart cameos — being processed into a pornographic property. Most of the thrusting successes who frequent her, she wryly notes, shrink from "old-fashioned impaling" sex. The powerful seem low on potency. "It was virginal sex, or rather, not sex at all", Lauren reflects as, according to her clients' whims, cameras whirr and voyeurs stare, blue videos flicker, and she is squeezed into rubber rigs, sprawled across transparent plastic chairs or perched on a Finnish exercise cycle. To retain some sense of balance in these unpropitious circumstances, she assures herself that she is really in control — a user of the men who think they're using her.

Mordantly portraying different kinds of exploitation, *Doctor Slaughter* is markedly similar in tone and tenor to the stories in Theroux's *The London Embassy*. In fact, it seems to owe its genesis to one of them, "Fury": a piece about a couple of girls — one an American graduate in economics who turns to high-price

prostitution, the other a vegetarian physical fitness fanatic — who have been merged to produce Lauren. *Doctor Slaughter's* background resembles that of *The London Embassy*, too: London, murky in more ways than one, a dank, dirty labyrinth of snobbery, rapaciousness and monied savagery. And there's the same concern with documenting flaccidity and corruption in terse prose kept healthily crisp with ironic metaphor.

Finally, the narrative — full of unsuspected traps — swivels round to deliver a come-uppance to Lauren. She finds she's been bought

and used for ends she never dreamed of, and involved in a scenario more perverse than any of those she knowingly acted out. To emphasize the point that the independence, power and sophistication she prided herself on was pathetically illusory, Theroux cranks his plot in rather ineffectual and melodramatic way into a story of political assassination. The book's heated, gruff, guinea closing scenes, however, carry less real force than the subtle episodes, with their glacially funny vignettes of contemporary London life and icy, exhilarating probings into greed and impoverishment.

Murder on the mind

Toby Flitton

ALLAN MASSIE
One Night in Winter
240pp. Bodley Head. £7.95.
0370 309707

In *One Night in Winter* Allan Massie returns to the Scottish themes he has explored before, and by mixing Nationalist politics, social analysis and brutal murder is able to treat them in greater depth. His new novel is episodic but not so staccato in manner as his *Change and Decay*, but he still seems rather unsure in narrative technique and inclined to be somewhat self-important about his own manner of proceeding — in this instance, with what might have been simply treated as an irregular alternation between the two stories, past and present. The hero's voice, however, is clear enough, in youth and middle age.

"To fictionalize the past is an act of liberation", Dallas Graham muses in his present tense, and he is certainly in need of release from the memory of a few traumatic months which has held him in thrall for over twenty years. Graham is now an indolent antique dealer, no longer successful in his business or in his marriage to a modish television documentary producer against whom he has long ago "double-glazed" himself.

He has sunk pretty low in his personal life, but retains a few standards, being for example resolved "never to grow a beard; that way, sleeping wrapped up in newspapers lies". Nor will he aver, in spite of the considerate recommendations of his wife's media colleagues, submit himself to psychoanalysis. He is self-analytical enough already, jolting a self-indulgent journal *Intime* which allows for some plausible and well-documented retrospection to back up his dogged soliloquy — both of which are essential to the development of the plots. Avoiding the shrink, Graham is free to luxuriate in some upper-Putney angst, a trait that is particularly useful when one of his wife's "clients" or interview victims is brought home and turns out to be a newly-released woman convict whom he knew in Scotland twenty years before.

The past intrudes with violence, and Graham recounts the story of himself as an indolent young man newly graduated from Cambridge and returning alone to his family's Victorian mansion in Aberdeenshire to subsist on a minute allowance from family trustees until he is of age to disperse his small fairly inheritance. He soon falls into a course of reading (mainly *Redgauntlet*), desultory writing (some Jacobite novelizing), and regular drinking (on the slate at the village pub). It is a pleasant, mildewed existence, but just as the overgrown policies of the mansion-house are brightened in summary by the rampant rhododendrons, so his life is ventilated by chance exposure to the court of Fraser Donnelly, a contractor with a local (and Nationalist) notoriety as a domineering, go-getting, hard-driving lord of misrule, attractive both sexually and intellectually, and "determined to take life by the throat and thrust it where he wished".

The fact that Donnelly (entirely convincing as a kenspeckle provincial "character") is a demagogue, a bully and a loud does not become obvious at once to the callow, anglicized fair-ling, for whom talk of Californian morality and political liberation are immediately attractive. Fraser Donnelly's tawdry circle — including a warned-off drunken minister with hiacatanite, a dubious colonel from Aberdeen sailing near to the wind in his business and municipal interests, a small-town nymphomaniac on the

way down, and a local left-wing journalist on the way up — all have an appealing raffishness. A rural orgy, with all kinds of hangovers and goings-on, almost ceremoniously presented, has its moral and emblematic values, but the lesser characters are gradually removed so as to "reduce our dramatic personnel to a number not beyond the resources of a contemporary civic theatre". The dénouement has to be a ported at second hand, and includes an episode on a Cretan holiday when Donnelly and his cronies attempt to refuel his potency and his hedonism at what they conceive to be a fount. Retribution comes, in a distinctly bytavian way. Tensions mount at home. Donnelly is murdered by a wife who can bear it longer. Graham must necessarily pick up the details from others, but there are complications enough, emotional and evidential, to merit constant re-examination even two years later. His own evidence was important in the trial, but sufficiently unclear to have left parts of the experience like a tape replaying his mind.

He learns but little wisdom and takes but little comfort from the opportunity for *Intime* offered to go over some of it again with one of the women accomplices — she who is now one of the victims of his wife's television series of "media-slumming" programmes. Retribution at least allows some relief from punishment, though it does not provide much alleviation of guilt.

One Night in Winter is Allan Massie's best book to date. He is fully at home in the Scotland of his story, at several social levels, and has a good command of strong vernacular dialogue, not least its obscenities. Some characters overlap with his previous writings, such as Manale Niven, the advocate-MP of *The Last Peacock* (where he "thinks himself a wit but only a wag") making a guest appearance. But their world is treated with much greater fullness, and some self-induced literary bickering apart, Mr Massie must be congratulated on his powerful new novel.

DOROTHY SIMPSON
Close Her Eyes
224pp. Michael Joseph. £8.95.
07181 23883

Another case for Inspector Thanet and his right-hand aidekick, Sergeant Llinham. Fifteen-year-old Charley Pritchard, daughter of a narrow, taciturn religious father, disappears and is later found in an alley near home with her head bashed in. An interestingly imagined and extremely well-handled story; the gradual disclosure of the nature of the Pritchard family and almost Simononesque flair. But domestic Thanet is worried about his wife's affection. Llinham's wife is about to give birth — perhaps a little overdue.

JOHN SHERWOOD
Green Trigger Fingers
153pp. Gollancz. £7.95.
0575 034076

Celia Grant, a middle-aged widow who runs a nursery garden in a Home Counties village and works as a jobbing gardener, finds, looking at the alstroemerias she expects, something much nastier in the herbaceous border of the village Victoria manor house. As Celia struggles against the suspicions of the police and the hostility of the locals, the plot thickens with torrid, taking in assault, art forgery, and living off immoral earnings. A compact, well-organized and well-written book, with a pleasantly cynical view of village life.

Waiting, waiting

Steven Runciman

NICHOLAS SHAKESPEARE
The Men who would be King: A look at royalty in exile
167pp. Sidgwick and Jackson. £9.95.
0283 989483
ANNE SOMERSET
Ladies in Waiting: From the Tudors to the present day
342pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £12.50.
0297 784013

There are a few minor errors in the book. There is no such thing as a German archduke. AD 33 seems a curious date for the creation of the Roman Empire. Wilhelm of Wied, briefly King of Albania, was not King Carol's uncle but his uncle's wife's nephew. King Manoel of Portugal's wife is described as being glaringly German: in fact her mother was Italian and her paternal grandmother Portuguese. Nor was there any mystery about Manoel's death: it occurred because no one could be found, at Twickenham at the weekend, ready to perform the tracheotomy that would have saved him. But it is all agreeably readable, despite an occasional split infinitive and an odd use of epithets. When we read of Princess Teresa's "dewy hand", the impression given is that the hand had received too many damp kisses; which is not, perhaps, what the author intended.

Lady Anne Somerset's book is more seriously researched. It is not so much a history of the institution of ladies-in-waiting as a history of the court intrigues sustained by these ladies from Tudor times onwards; which illustrates quite effectively what their functions and powers have been down the ages. Lady Anne rightly points out that till fairly lately the only paid job — and it was never well paid — that a young lady of good family could take on was one at the court. Her book also makes it clear that, for much of the period surveyed, most of these young ladies were easygoing in their morals. Indeed, the book loses its momentum when we come to recent times and a court of dignified respectability. The intrigues of the court ladies in the past may have been quite as influential as the book suggests. For instance, its long account of Queen Anne's quarrel with the Duchess of Marlborough ignores the influence of the Duke's great military victories. But there certainly were times, as under Mary Tudor, when the monarch was influenced by her ladies.

The book has many interesting items and touches of humour; but it is not very easy to read and could have done with some pruning. The scholarship is sound if not very profound; and the errors minor. But a book concerned with titled folk should get their names right. The Townshend Marquessate does not include "of" in its title; and Cholmondeley should not be spelt without its first "c".

We next have a rag-bag of adventures, including the Brookes of Sarawak, who hardly qualify for entry as the last Rajah voluntarily sold his raj to the British Crown. The author's favourite is Orville-Antoine de Tonnens, King of Aracania, who for a time established himself in South America but whose kingdom collapsed before his death. There have been three Princes of Aracania since then, living in France; but as there seems to have been no dynastic connection between them, it is difficult to know on what basis his claim. Shakespeare's prize oddity, who really has no place in a book on royalty in exile, is a lady who claims to be the daughter of King George V and the Queen-Regent, Maria Cristina of Spain. The author triumphantly produces the information that the then Duke of York visited the Queen in June, 1888. But, like Miss Habsburg, with her, as she calls herself, lives

Ascendant star

E. S. Turner

SARAH BRADFORD
Princess Grace
242pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £9.95.
0297 78370X

"Why do you go through the world in gloves, / O slim gold woman whom everyone loves?" a poet might have enquired of Grace Kelly. She was the "classiest" ornament of the post-war mass-audience cinema, a serene highness before becoming a Serene Highness.

According to Sarah Bradford, her eminence as a star cramped her marital choice: "whom could she now find of sufficient stature that he would not lose his identity in hers and become mere Mr Grace Kelly?" *Quelle délicatesse!* Or feminists might cry, *Quelle horreur!* The coarse-grained wit doubt whether such gracious sensibilities were involved; the star, they will suspect, simply fell for a prince as a drunk falls into a coal-hole. (Prince Rainier was certainly seeking a bride worthy of his stature; a previous biographer of the Princess, Gwen Robyns, tells of a plot to launch Marilyn Monroe at him.)

Sarah Bradford must have been well aware of the perils of writing a life compounded of slow business and royalty (her last book was on Disraeli). She sensibly damps down the stardust. It is a cool, tight-reined, well-marshalled book, with apt quotations from friends or gossip for every occasion. If the Princess's failings emerge as no more than fluff on an altar, it is yet no hagiography.

In 1944 the "Class Diary" of a Pennsylvania boys' school reported: "Rumours of a rift between a Buick salesman's son and a brick-maker's daughter. The buzzards gather . . ." Grace, the brickmaker's daughter, was then fourteen. Such speculation followed her all her life. The highly competitive Kelly menfolk tended to discourage Grace's less virile admirers. One of these, invited to her home, was given "the grip" by three hearties specially invited by her brother and in a second was on the floor. Perhaps he was lucky not to have been treated in addition to a "hot foot" and an exploding cigar.

The Shah escaped this treatment. How Grace came to be his escort for a week in New York when she was acting in commercials (one for insecticide) and cultivating a voice "like cream of tomato soup" is something not fully explained (a family friend called Marie Sachs fixed it up, which only makes it sound more mysterious). Afterwards a buzzard descended in the form of "Ma" Kelly, shocked by her daughter's acceptance of the Shah's jewellery. Grace, however, kept it until she married Prince Rainier.

When film-making Grace tended to have discreet romances with her leading man. The one with Clark Gable occurred on location in

Africa, "the first and last time she was dropped by a man". When Ray Milland's wife threatened divorce Grace ran for cover, dreading her family's wrath. Quoting a statement that William Holden had "a brief but satisfactory romance" with Grace, Sarah Bradford comments, "whatever that may mean". The reader may have uttered the same exclamation on reading a few pages earlier about three of Grace's men who had "taught her about life".

Princess Grace is most readable when people behave badly. Wealthy "Pa" Kelly, that redoubtable Democrat, fears the overtures of "some damn, broken-down Prince" from an unheralded country, but is reassured as to his prospects by a scheming priest straight out of Evelyn Waugh. Sixty-one passengers booked on the SS Constitution are turned away so that seventy members of the Kelly clan may sail to Monte Carlo for the wedding. On arrival Grace is nursing a dog, but finds a free hand for her fiancé. The photographers behave like baboons. Lady Docker reports the wedding, commenting on the modest tonnage of the royal yacht, previously hired by her husband and herself and found to be a bit "snug". *Le Monde* suspects a plot to make Monaco an American base.

The practical jokes of film-making (Grace and Alec Guinness stuffing a tomahawk into each other's beds) give way to palace jokes (Rainier rising at dinner to reveal that his cucumber is a live snake). As a princess Grace discharges her duties admirably, and that includes producing a much-needed Grimaldi heir. She slips up when she agrees to appear in a Hitchcock film as a thief with psychological hang-ups, a "hardly suitable" part, in Sarah Bradford's view. The Monégasques are outraged, even when told that their princess's fat fee will go to charity, and the idea is dropped. After that she concentrates on fertilizing the cultural life of Monaco, for example, by organizing a James Joyce Festival with the aid of that distinguished resident, Anthony Burgess.

Thanks to the odd "ex-palace observer" we share the more humdrum moments of life in Europe's oldest ruling family: anxious weight-watching, princely somnolence after meals, Grace working away at her ever-changing hobbies and her identity. She emerges as a bundle of contradictions: ice and fire, shy but revelling in parties, devout Catholic and devout astrologer, dedicated to hamburgers and champagne (sometimes together, and why not?). It is very hard to believe that she "never understood the reasons for her own celebrity".

A Century of Style by Sandra Barwick (187pp. George Allen and Unwin. £14.95. 0 04 391009 2) looks at the women who, rather than couturiers or models, are in her opinion the real style setters. Among the many she believes to have had great influence are Alexandra and Diana Princesses of Wales and Wallis Simpson.

Mystical and material

Tim Dooley

ELAINE FEINSTEIN
The Border
113pp. Hutchinson. £6.95.
009 156308

Visiting his grandmother Inge during one Australian spring — a visit bounded by the Jewish New Year and the Day of Atonement — American-born Oxford historian Saul Wendler is anxious to find out what he can about his grandfather, the poet Hans Wendler. Inge shrewdly guesses that Saul is motivated by more than family piety, the focus of his professional interest being Hans's acquaintance with the critic Walter Benjamin during the period leading up to the latter's suicide in 1940. Inge is amused by Saul, and does not resent his interest in a figure who is presented in *The Border* as "A Marxist who is not a materialist", a genius-hero who "has come to grips with all the horrors of our time". She gives her grandson a present: a briefcase, containing the relics she retains from Europe in the late 1930s — three poems by Hans and the diary he kept in Vienna during the opening months of 1938, Inge's own diary from Paris in September-November of the same year and five unanswered letters written to Hans from Moscow by his mistress Hilde Dorf during 1939.

These documents, together with Inge's hurried resumé of the events of the year that brought her husband's death as well as Benjamin's, make up the major part of Elaine Feinstein's finely crafted, teasing and perceptive novel. *The Border's* evocation of Austria on the eve of Anschluss and France before and during the Occupation is entirely convincing, confirming Feinstein's ability to write with enviable ease about a variety of European societies. Dramatic as the events of this "history of disastrous choices" are, external conflict is less important here than interior struggles, and the title of the novel may suggest, as much as the national boundaries that are so important to the refugees, a moral or psycholo-

gical "border" beyond which it is impossible to understand another's actions.

Such a barrier certainly exists within the "intimate dependence" of the Wendlers' marriage. Inge is a scientist and Hans finds her "arcane, incomprehensible work in particle physics" alien, while Inge "cannot read his poetry . . . It is a kind of blindness." Hans's wider mistrust of Inge's love, a product of self-loathing and envy of Inge's public success, inspires an idealistic, disastrous affair with the young Communist Hilde Dorf which, when it is discovered, destroys the practical Inge's security and confidence. The unappiness of these gifted and generous spirits helps to justify a wider pessimism within the novel about relations between men and women, and between logical and intuitive modes of thought.

What hope *The Border* offers of healing these divisions begins with shared suffering. Having been "counted as Jewish" and persecuted as such, Inge and Hans come to rediscover the religious and cultural heritage they have respectively ignored and denied. Walter Benjamin's thought, which seems to offer hope of a marriage between the material and mystical, allows the possibility of commerce between "insight" and the "world of cause and effect". By helping him to admit his Jewishness, Benjamin's influence causes Hans to regain his self-respect, and his love for Inge, though it cannot halt the tragic concatenation of events, which bring the novel to its climax.

Although *The Border* has moments of attentiveness (notably in Part Five when Inge, speaking to Saul of her husband, refers to "your father"), the diaries and letters have a psychological depth and immediacy which is quite unusual. It is possible to read *The Border*, in part, as a response to D. M. Thomas's *The White Hotel* — the two novels having formal as well as thematic similarities. Feinstein writes neither as intensely nor as inclusively as Thomas about "the horrors of our time", yet within of the relationships between suffering, desire and catastrophe which seems both saner and more productive than Thomas's.

Social History from Hutchinson



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Back to the beaches

Michael Carver

MAX HASTINGS
Overlord: D-Day and the Battle for Normandy 1944.
 368pp. Michael Joseph. £12.95.
 07181 23263
WARREN TUTE, JOHN COSTELLO and TERRY HUGHES (editors)
D-Day
 256pp. Pan. Paperback £4.95.
 0330244183

The fortieth anniversary of the landings in Normandy in 1944 has been marked by a spate of books about the campaign. Max Hastings, in *Overlord*, celebrates the anniversary with a book which combines serious historical and critical comment with brilliant reportage in the form of the personal reminiscences of those who took part in the campaign. He brings both the arguments between higher commanders, and the fighting on the battlefield itself to life more vividly than any previous books.

Hastings's perceptive and realistic judgments on military issues are particularly in evidence in his assessment of Montgomery. Fully aware of his faults, Hastings nevertheless gives him credit for getting a firm grip of the planning from the time of his appointment; for the clarity and determination with which he turned the plan into reality; and for the enthusiasm he inspired in all – military and civilian alike. He makes it clear that although the original plan for the conduct of the campaign was followed, in general terms, and led to victory, it did not proceed, as Montgomery continued to claim, either in detail or in timing in the way that had been hoped or expected. He makes the perceptive comment that it might not have been so successful if it had. If the Germans had not committed themselves to fighting the main battle forward in Normandy, but had withdrawn, as expected, to the Seine and fought it there, the weight of their Fifteenth Army, which played virtually no part in the campaign, would have been added to that of their Seventh. One major error of judgment from which Montgomery was saved by Eisenhower was his re-

commendation in the early hours of June 4 that the decision to go ahead with the landings – which had been taken the day before, with the result that the leading landing craft were already at sea – should not be reversed, in spite of the weather forecast. If his advice had been taken, the landings might have been chaotic.

Hastings's description of the landings themselves is excellent, combining a clear explanation of the methods employed with first-hand accounts of action, seen from both sides. The critical situation on the American Omaha Beach is graphically described, as, too, is the failure of the British 3rd Division to secure Caen on D-Day. In the first of the many shrewd judgments which he brings to bear on the controversial issues arising from the campaign, Hastings sees this failure as being "chiefly the fault of over-optimism and sloppy thinking by the planners, together with the immense difficulty of organizing a major all-arms attack in the wake of an amphibious landing". He is equally perceptive on the vexed question of whether or not Montgomery was really trying to break out from the British Second Army's sector in the series of operations which followed. The first of these was intended to encircle Caen with 51st Highland Division from the east, 7th Armoured Division from the west via Villers-Bocage, and the air-drop of 1st Airborne Division between the two, the last of which Leigh-Mallory, fortunately, vetoed. After the disappointing performance of the veterans of his desert army, Montgomery tried again with O'Connor's 8th Corps of fresh divisions in their first action, Operation EPSOM. This ground to a halt on the bitterly contested Hill 112 between the rivers Odon and Orne. Montgomery has been severely criticized for accepting failure and not persisting in attempts to break out in both these operations. The next operation, supported by heavy bombers, achieved no more than entry into Caen.

Hastings recognizes as nonsense Montgomery's insistence that all had gone according to plan, and that he was trying to do no more than tie down as many German armoured divisions on Dempsey's front as he could, in order to pave the way for Bradley's break-out. There is

no doubt that Montgomery was trying to get at least as far as Falaise, but when operations ground to a halt and casualties mounted, he refused to persist when he saw that the result would be more casualties with only slender hope of gaining more ground. Hastings observes that "Montgomery served his own interests and those of his men very well by maintaining his insistence to his subordinates that all was going to plan. But he did himself a great disservice by making the same assertions in private to Eisenhower, Churchill, Tedder and even his unshakable patron Brooke."

Hastings argues that Montgomery's initial plan to seize Caen, and his later movements to envelop the town, were well conceived. The failure lay in execution. He attributes this to failures in tactics and training, in leadership at division and corps level, to a feeling of anticlimax after the landings had succeeded, but also to the undeniable fact, which those without direct experience of the battlefield were unwilling to acknowledge, that the German army, in its leadership, its tactical skill, its fighting spirit, and in the technical performance of most of its weapons, was superior to those of the Allies. His criticisms and comments are applied as much to the American army, to whose actions he gives equal prominence, as to the British.

Hastings attributes the failure of the British Operation GOODWOOD, immediately preceding Bradley's Operation COBRA, which led to the final break-out, primarily to the unsoundness of the concept, the plan and the preparations. Its basis was the idea that, as there was a critical shortage of infantry, but a plentiful supply of tanks, the latter should be used *en masse* in a frontal assault. But the bottle-neck north of Caen made it impossible to deploy them in secrecy or to employ them *en masse*, echeloned in waves which could follow each other in quick succession, exploiting the effect of the massive air bombardment. Hastings is as critical as many people were at the time, and almost everybody has been since, of Montgomery's ambitious claims before the battle, premature and inaccurate announcements of success, and his later claim that the battle achieved all that he had intended.

D-Day, which was first published ten years ago, is devoted mainly to a detailed description of the plans for the landings, the methods employed and their execution. Well written, authoritative in matters of detail and lavishly illustrated, it will be of value to those who wish to know exactly what happened, without delving too deeply into the ifs and buts. As such it would be handy preliminary reading before a visit to the beaches or to the museum commemorating the operation.

The same cool, balanced appraisal is applied to the last controversial issue of the Normandy battles, the Falaise Gap. Hastings believes that it was no fault of Montgomery's that the pincers were not firmly closed between Falaise and Argentan and the escape of some of the remnants of the German Seventh Army prevented. It is true that the southward thrust of the Cnudians to Falaise and beyond was disappointingly slow, but it was Bradley, on his own initiative, who refused to let Patton, by and drive north from Argentan, for good military reasons, as Hastings points out. Montgomery would have preferred to stick to his original plan for an encircling movement further east.

Hastings is generous to Eisenhower, and rightly gives considerable credit to Montgomery and Bradley who "understood perfectly the limitations, in comparison to the Germans, of the capability of their own forces." They had not been sent to Normandy to demonstrate the superiority of their fighting men to those of Hitler, but to win the war at tolerable cost – subtly but importantly different objectives. The author's reflections on this theme lead him to conclude that:

One lesson from the fighting in Normandy seems important for any future battle that the armies of democracy might be called upon to fight. If a Soviet invasion force swept across Europe from the east, it would be unhelpful if contemporary British or American soldiers were trained and conditioned to believe that the level of endurance and sacrifice displayed by the Allies in Normandy would suffice to defeat the invaders. For an example to follow in the event of a future European battle, it will be necessary to look to the German army; and to the extraordinary defence its men conducted in Europe in the face of all the odds against them, and in spite of the demoralized Führer.

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In the heat of battle

A. O. J. Cockshut

ERIC MORRIS
Salerno: A military fiasco
 357pp. Hutchinson. £12.95.
 0 09 152707

Nothing is easier than to win a battle long after it is over. There are a number of books, of which Churchill's *World Crisis* is the most celebrated, that demonstrate how easily Jellicoe could have won Jutland. But Churchill used post-war charts, showing the exact position of all the German and British ships, and did not indicate clearly how much Jellicoe knew, and what he could reasonably be expected to infer. I was uncomfortably reminded of this in reading passages like this in Eric Morris's book:

... the great tragedy of the Italian campaign was Sicily. It was the first invasion and the big mistake... the Germans had taken the enormous gamble of moving troops by the way of the Straits of Messina onto the island into a probable death trap... 40,000 Germans, 62,000 Italians, 97 guns, 48 panzers and 17,000 tons of ammunition and supplies crossed the Strait of Messina under the noses of Allied air and naval forces.

"Under the noses" is a loose metaphor which accords ill with the precise figures given in the same sentence. The difficulty of finding ships at sea, one of the great themes of twentieth-century sea and air warfare, cannot be nullified by phrases. Or again:

I must conclude that Montgomery could have released a battalion or two to march cross-country and reach Salerno by September 12 or 13. Had they followed the route used by Moorehead and the correspondents, this force could have arrived in time to contribute to the battle. Their early arrival could in turn have convinced the Germans to break off contact sooner. (My italics)

The author has failed to put himself back in the position of a commander who could not know exactly which route was clear; and then,

has piled speculative hypothesis on hindsight to the last sentence. A battalion or two is seldom a strong enough force to influence a great battle decisively; so, presumably, the point is that the Germans might have been bluffed into retreating. But they might not, and German commanders, as a rule, were not easily bluffed.

War is always fought in a fog of ignorance and misinformation. But the situation in Italy in September 1943 was exceptionally obvious, because of the Italian surrender with all its unpredictable consequences. As planner of a complex strategic debate, then, Morris is not very convincing.

The book succeeds much better in giving the feel and experience of war. Morris has made use of a large number of personal reminiscences, and achieved a number of telling reconstructions of local events and the clash of personalities. He conveys something of the closeness of war when he shows General Clark catching sight of German Panzers through his binoculars. He shows Churchill, barking back as ever to memories of 1915, urging General Alexander to do what Ian Hamilton did not do at Gallipoli, go ashore and get near the beach. And he describes convincingly the inevitable tension and rivalry between allies at every level, from general to private soldier. One illustration of this is especially revealing: when an American Corps commander seemed to be losing grip of himself and his duties, both Alexander and Clark were at once aware of all the points of national prestige and jealousy that might arise, and succeeded in handling him delicately. After this, no reader will be surprised to find that Montgomery is not a favourite with the author. The "Montgomery public relations band wagon" and the BBC (the assisting it) come in for stern criticism. The book's main strength is in showing in particular detail the strangeness, the unpredictability and the painfulness of war.

Coming of age

Richard Freeborn

JOHN MERSEUREAU
Russian Romantic Fiction
 336pp. Ann Arbor: Ardis. \$29.50 (paperback), \$10.
 0882337394

John Mersereau puts it at the opening of his first chapter, "this is the story of the coming of age of Russian fiction". It extends from 1815 to 1840. If, in that year, Thomas Carlyle claimed that Russia "had no voice of genius", he may have been right at a superficial level, but literary genius was there in the work of Pushkin, Lermontov and Gogol, though by contemporary standards it may have seemed hard to find among the prolific burgeoning of derivative manners and themes which comprised the greater part of Russian prose fiction at that time.

Professor Mersereau's book takes the reader indefatigably through a mass of largely forgotten material and in so doing sets the surviving work, from Kravtsov's *Poor Lisa* to Gogol's *Dead Souls*, in proper perspective. In the course of "trudging through the often arid landscape of Romantic prose", as the author describes his task on one occasion, the reader may grow weary with Sentimentalism, Romanticism, Realism, travel notes, historical tales, supernatural tales, society tales, physiological sketches, picaresque novels, novels of manners, family chronicles and all the other categories of writing that fill the landscape of this subject. He may also feel sometimes that Mersereau's manner is too facetious and jocular. The tone is that of a tour guide who tends to rattle off the story of this or that item but rarely pauses for a closer look, and when he does the result can seem disappointing to someone who has seen some of the more famous sights before.

Yet the reader seeking information about

A known voice

Henry Gifford

BORIS PASTERNAK
Poems
 Translated by Lydia Pasternak Slater
 110pp. Allen and Unwin. Paperback, £2.95.
 004 891052X

Lydia Pasternak Slater says in her introduction to this enlarged version of *Fifty Poems* (1963): "I have tried to translate in the same way as my brother wrote." When Boris Pasternak abandoned a musical career for poetry, it was to continue music by other means – a change of instrument. Whatever the difficulties of the attempt to "preserve his melodies and rhythms" and to reflect sometimes his verbal daring, they have not proved insurmountable.

Pasternak in Mrs Slater's English is recognizably Pasternak. Translating these poems meant the recovery of shared experiences: many of them she heard him declaim when they were new. The revised introduction opens with the vivid account of a day together outside revolutionary Moscow clearing snow from railway tracks – the scene was adapted for *Doctor Zhivago* – and she then evokes the Boris of those years, writing intently at his table, or improvising on the piano, "unfathomable, tremendous". Because the poems carry for their translator a living context, they ring true: the cadences of a known voice, its tempo and timbre, could not be forgotten.

About half of them belong to his earlier phase of startled discovery; the rest are from those more subdued returns to the same vision in the second phase, rivalling the other with the *Zhivago* poems (eight of these are included). Normally it has been possible to keep the syntax, though lines are sometimes shifted about; the rhythms match, in a slightly heavier dance; there is a density of sound pattern to indicate the richness of the original; the rhyme-scheme is more skilfully reproduced (to the advantage of the sense). Pasternak's virtuosity, above all in the earlier poems, could not be mirrored. But these versions are always readable; in spite of the hazards that often wreck formal imita-

tion in English, they omit little and add less. Certain problems still lead to awkwardness. Pasternak sometimes ends his lines with a dactyl: "On the Stesmer" requires this for the first and third lines of each quatrain. But "morning air" refuses to scan like "harbinger", for instance, "Kama gised" like "camouflage". So the opening line takes a large rhythm not in the original – "The stir of leaves, the chilly morning air" – and loses the slight shiver at the end. Elsewhere the metre may not be clear initially: "A boat is beating on the breast of the lake" fumbles its steps until guided by its partner: "Neckline and knuckles and rowlocks – O wait" ("With Oars at Rest").

Transposing the events in a poem is risky. The infrequent cases of it here hardly matter, apart from the conclusion to "Wet Paint". As translated, the poet says his gloom will gleam whiter "Than lampshades, than a bandaged brow, / Than a delirious dream". But the bandage should have reserved its shock for the climax. Such oversights are rare, and compensated by an imaginative addition like "the gait of *Cautious* herons in the marshes" ("Three Variants"); by the truly Pasternakian word-play of "Continue pounding and compound... To graveyard compost" ("Soul"); and by the four variations of one verb in "Winter Night": the candle "flared", "shone", "stood" and "wept".

Pasternak thought highly of his sister's translations. What she wrote twenty years ago in the introduction, now re-cast and amplified, makes a moving tribute to him and to a remarkable family that shared his dedication to art.

The dark city

Christopher Barnes

SHARON LEITER
Akhmatova's Petersburg
 215pp. Cambridge University Press. £17.50.
 0 521 25781 6

Petersburg has always exercised a special fascination over the Russian literary imagination, and its urban "myth" has been built up successively by Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoevsky, Blok, Bely, Mandelstam. But it is Akhmatova who is best suited to the treatment offered in Sharon Leiter's book. She was the longest-lived and most consistent celebrator of that "dark city by a grim river" that she designated as her "blessed cradle" and which became the scene of her creative life, and a constant locus in her poetry. Leiter takes us through a chronological account of the developing image of Petersburg-Petrograd-Leningrad in Akhmatova's verse. She makes intelligent and full use of available Russian source material, her readings of individual poems are sensitive and sensible, and the book as a whole is well planned and elegantly written.

considered the precursor of later works by Gogol, Dostoevsky, Remizov, Zoshchenko, and others". Also notable among the Romantic writers of the period are Kuechelbecker, Zagoskin and Velmin, the last deserving more than cursory study. Finally, invidious though it may be to single them out in such a host of literary eccentrics, there are the "women fictionists" of whom the most outstanding, by all accounts, was Nadezhda Durova, known as the "cavalry-maiden", who masqueraded as a Russian officer during the Napoleonic campaigns, was wounded at the battle of Borodino and retired from the service in 1816 with the rank of Junior Cavalry Cap-

tain. Pushkin, to his great credit, enthusiastically published her "informal tale" in his journal, *Contemporary*, twenty years later. Not content with that literary debut, the enterprising lady went on to publish several more works using her male pseudonym of Alexondrov until her meteoric career ended abruptly and unaccountably in 1840.

What disconcerts about Mersereau's approach, for all his engaging disclaimers about his subject and the general lightness of his manner, is to find Pushkin's *Tales of Belkin* tucked away between the melodrama of Marinsky's *Amulet-Bek* and the historical bric-à-brac of Kalashnikov's *The Daughter of the Merchant Zholobov*. No doubt readers of the time were similarly disconcerted. But in this case the similarity of treatment accorded to both, the one a gem without parallel in the prose of the period, the others justifiably forgotten, produces the unintentional effect of demeaning the Pushkinian masterpiece while unfairly highlighting the inadequacy of the approach. Of course, there is a subjective bias here, which we are warned of in Mersereau's introduction. It is not obtrusive, though it makes him dismiss Gogol's *The Terrible Vengeance* in a sentence and describe his *The Nose* as "more a silly than comic", with which all readers may not agree. Moreover, the claim that "*Dead Souls* remains the last major work of Russian Romantic fiction" begs so many questions about the meaning of Romanticism that one may legitimately wonder whether any treatment of it in terms of such general categories is worthwhile.

Mersereau dismisses all such criticism by anticipating it in his introduction. He does not anticipate praise, and his book as a whole deserves warm praise. It is the only comprehensive study in English of this neglected period of Russian prose fiction and makes a most welcome contribution to the fuller understanding of European Romanticism.

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American notes

Christopher Hitchens

John Kennedy Toole took the title of his novel *A Confederacy of Dunces* from Jonathan Swift's *Thoughts on Various Subjects* where it is written that, when a true genius appears in the world, you may know him by this sign, that the dunces are all in confederacy against him. Originally, the thought is used to set off Ignatius J. Reilly, the massive, smelly, self-centred individualist whose doings, and the doings of whose guts and valves, form the matter of the book. But Toole could never get anybody to publish his work and when he committed suicide at the age of thirty-two there was no doubt some aardonic echo of Swift in his heart. His mother, Thelma, managed by amazing exertions to get Walker Percy to read the chaotic manuscript; and the author of *The Moviegoer* was so enthralled by it that he saw to its publication. New Orleans was vindicated as a city which was not, after all, deaf to the literary endeavours of its sons. But the vindication came too late for Toole.

Now, through a bizarre irony, his mother is attempting to prevent the publication of his only other surviving work. Before he wrote *A Confederacy of Dunces*, Toole completed another, shorter work entitled *Neon Bible*. It describes the decline of a small town into religious fundamentalism, poverty and, ultimately, murder and death. According to Rhoda Faust of the New Orleans Maple Street Bookshop, who hopes to become its publisher, *Neon Bible* has very little humour but considerable force. Thelma Toole claims that it is an "immature" work, which would do no credit to her son's reputation. He was only sixteen when he wrote it (half-way through his life, as it turns out). Since the action of the novel describes a silly and sad mother figure, desperate and over-made-up, there may be other reasons for Mrs Toole's apparently inconsistent conduct on this occasion. And Louisiana inheritance law, which made her an executor along with other surviving relatives, means that she has the power to delay publication indefinitely.

A Confederacy of Dunces was a great novel by numerous definitions. It created one major character – the flatulent and garrulous Ignatius – and a number of useful minor ones: Myrna Minkoff, his horrible New York girlfriend, the luckless patrolman Mancuso, and Jones, the black man in whom, as Walker Percy says, Toole has achieved the near-impossible, a superb comic character of immense wit and resourcefulness without the least trace of Rastus minstrelsy. It would be unbearable if, after all her labour in his behalf, Mrs Thelma Toole kept her son's other novel in the bottom drawer.

The United States is a nation of immigrants, as any saloon bar philosopher can tell you. It is, and has always been, a magnet for writers, as any publishers' agent will tell you. Its Constitution guarantees freedom of speech; as any civic teacher will confirm. But it also has the McCarran-Walter Provisions of the Immigration and Nationality Act, which were passed over President Truman's veto in 1952. Under these provisions, numerous authors are prevented from visiting or residing in the United States, and American citizens are thereby prevented, if not from reading them, at least from hearing or meeting them. Recently, the PEN American Centre, which has long been exasperated by this state of affairs, sponsored an evening of protest about it. American writers took part, giving readings from the work of their "undesirable" confrères. John Irving read Gabriel García Márquez's "Death Constant

Beyond Love". William Styron read from Julio Cortázar, Arthur Miller from Angel Rama, and Susan Sontag from *Terra Nostra* by Carlos Fuentes. Other writers who have been deported from the United States, or who have experienced difficulty in being admitted, include Graham Greene, Michel Foucault, Czesław Miłosz, Joseph Needham, Dario Fo and Alberto Moravia. Most of the criteria employed by the bureaucracy have been explicitly political, but on other occasions it has proved impossible to determine the grounds for exclusion which are, in any case, so generously defined as to be, once invoked, unchallengeable.

No other Western country has such a law, and the whole thing has become embarrassing to the government as well as infuriating to PEN and other literary organizations. There is hope that Representative Barney Frank's bill, which would abolish the exclusion provisions, will carry Congress in the current session.

One of the most absorbing and interesting literary friendships of the 1930s was that which existed between Katherine Anne Porter and Josephine Herbst. Because they were, for much of the time, widely separated by distance, much of their relationship took the form of letter-writing. Many of the letters survive, and they show Josephine Herbst to be the more emotional and passionate of the pair, writing with alternate fury and anger, while Katherine Anne Porter was cooler and more cynical, with a sometimes rather cultivated detachment. "I find it very hard to live in so impersonal a world", wrote Herbst. "In the 1920s the world seemed better to live in. I suppose it is what everyone feels in time. But at least people did have personal ties, people exchanged visits, had friendships that meant a great deal. Now it seems as if nothing existed except committees.

Sales of books and manuscripts

Sarah Bradford

In 1666 a seventeenth-century manuscript was rescued from a smouldering rubbish heap in Lancashire. It was not, however, until 1982 that Professor Elliot Rose of the University of Toronto was able to announce its identification as another major work by Thomas Traherne (see the TLS of March 19, 1982). This last Traherne manuscript entitled "The Commentaries of Heaven wherein the Mysteries of Felicity are opened: and All Things Discovered to be Objects of Hoppliness Every Being Created and Increased: being Alphabetically Represented (as it will appear) in the Light of Glory", came up for sale at Christie's, New York, on May 18.

It is, in Elliot Rose's words, "in terms of sheer volume, the most substantial writing of his that is yet known", comprising 400 closely-written pages, two columns a side, of prose and verse, some 350,000 words in all. Traherne did not complete his ambitious project, the one hundred headings beginning with "Abhorrence" and abruptly with "Bastard" and half the volume remains blank. The "Commentaries" was written between 1671 and 1674, the year of Traherne's death; whether he simply abandoned the project, daunted by its scope, or whether his final illness intervened, remains a subject for speculation. The contents of the volume range from inspired prose to somewhat McGonagall-esque verses whose quality apparently gave their author pause: "Consider! Traherne noted, "Whether it be not best to leave out some of these Poems". The manuscript was acquired by Quaritch for the British

In such a flinty plain as I now live I find it difficult to breathe." That was in 1938, Porter wrote back, in a rather elder-sisterly fashion, to say that, "you know I have gone here and there, looking too for understanding, trying to know something of the causes and disasters of our times...and I do not trust the people who profess to be working to make over this world – they need only more power to be, themselves, the evil they say they are fighting".

Given the times, it was natural that a good deal of the correspondence between the two women should be about politics. Again, Herbst was the more engaged of the two, and the one who took her pen and her notebook to Spain, to Cuba and to the dustbowl and the coalfields of the United States in the Depression. Porter was more restrained, taking a line against political regimentation, mistrustful of the communists and more inclined than Herbst to write for *Parisian Review* (though if they "print only more filth like Elizabeth Bishop's piece or Agee's poem I shall be obliged to write them and take back what I have said").

Josephine Herbst was shattered by the Nazi-Soviet pact and withdrew from public life until Pearl Harbor, when she took a job in Washington. This was at a time when poets were acknowledged legislators (Archibald MacLeish headed the Office of Facts and Figures, and the playwright Robert Sherwood was Deputy Director of the Office of the Coordinator of Information). It was in this latter bureaucracy, headed by Colonel "Wild Bill" Donovan, that Herbst found her niche. But the literary newcomers were not welcome. Malcolm Cowley was pushed into resignation, MacLeish was pilloried for his earlier support for Republican Spain, and Josephine Herbst, one day in May of 1942, was led from her desk by uniformed guards. The *Biographical Dictionary of Modern Literature* for that year describes her as a *cause célèbre*, and notes that "the only possible

explanation seems to have been her long and proud record of militant anti-fascism".

Now, more than forty years later, the mystery has been solved. Josephine Herbst lost her job, and some part of her reputation, because of a "confidential informant" who went to the FBI. And that "confidential informant" was Katherine Anne Porter. Documents, recently made public, show that she did so while making a condition of anonymity. (The full papers appear in Elinor Langer's biography of Herbst, to be published by Little, Brown in August. They are also excerpted in the forthcoming number of the quarterly *Grand Street*.)

The "evidence" given by Porter was abundant and contradictory at the time, which was why it could not lead to prosecution but could serve as the pretext for victimization. Herbst never discovered the identity of her persecutor and Langer records a trusting diary entry which she made after a meeting with Porter that very year: "Our feeling for each other stood up like long, gussies it will last forever. Believing friends." There seems no obvious explanation for Porter's malice, though there may be one in the sheer fact that her deposition to the FBI was fabricated. Romancing was a vice with her: she made up stories about her aristocratic origins, her love life and her escapades. As Langer speculates, "her literary star was rising, her marital star was falling. In Reno for her first divorce, could it be simply that she was bored? In a heart that was festering with age, she must have enjoyed the knowledge that she was doing a foul deed." Or, as Elizabeth Hardwick once put it, reviewing the "as told to" biography of Katherine Anne Porter written by Joe Givner a few years ago, "it is not a useful summarising sentiment to think of her as fiction, just as it is not to be altogether wise to think of her fiction as her life". Porter was, as noted, "inclined to fabrication about her past". Now we know she was not content with that

and twentieth-century English and American literature. Several items from the sale of the Prescott library (Christie's, New York, February 6, 1981) made their reappearance, notably a rare copy of Tennyson's "Charge of the Light Brigade" from the issue printed at the poet's orders for distribution to the soldiers at Sebastopol; this copy, inscribed by Tennyson to "Major M'Crea" (sic) of the Dragoon Guards, was bought by Fleming for \$9,900. A first edition of *Lady Winchelsea's Farewell*, inscribed by Wilde to Edmund Gosse, sold for \$6,785 to Nebenzahl, while Fleming paid \$8,250 for the Prescott copy of the first edition of Huxman's *A Shropshire Lad*, 1896, a presentation copy with a curious story behind it. Another (non-Prescott) copy with a fine association – inscribed by Housman to John Wise – went for \$8,800 to Horowitz. Prices generally for the Prescott items were lower than they had been in the celebrated sale three years before; where a sense of *déjà vu* was not apparent things were more interesting, particularly in American literature: M. Neville paid \$4,675 for an autograph manuscript of an article by Thomas Wolfe, "What a White Reads", and Bort Auerbach \$8,525 for his typed letters signed by Hart Crane to his publisher Horace Liveright, a document relating to the agreement for *White Buildings* and other material, while there were a number of lots from a good collection of H. L. Menckens, including a copy, with a double presentation inscription, of Menckens's first book, *Venue into Verse*, Baltimore, 1903 (\$2,750 to Horowitz). Curiously, since Edna St Vincent Millay was not generally a highly rated poet, a presentation copy to Frank Crowninshield of her book *Renaissance and Other Poems*, 1917, bought by Fleming for \$4,125. The correspondence of the sale were, however, undoubtedly the Hemingway material sent in by the author's family. Hemingway's brown leather briefcase, suitably battered and pasted with travel labels (\$5,610), his Vulture trunk (\$3,410), an autograph letter dated August 17, 1935, to John F. Kennedy with the short typed letter signed by Kennedy to which it was the reply (\$3,000), and a rather repellent object, two bulls' heads mounted, signed by Ordóñez and Ponce (\$4,675), nil of which were bought by anonymous private collector.

Letters

The Defence of Western Europe

Sir, – I lack space to cover all the errors in Michael Ignatieff's analysis (June 1) of Glucksman, Tatu *et al.* I therefore discuss the worst bits.

Ignatieff implicitly challenges Glucksman to produce a "scintilla" of evidence that "over-running Europe militarily or reducing it to Finlandized client-status is in the Soviet Union's capabilities, plans or long-term interests".

Ignatieff must know that to ask critics of a closed, suspicious tyranny such as Soviet imperialism to produce a "scintilla" of evidence is tantamount to demanding open information as to policy options which are simply unobtainable by those outside the intelligence services. Of course we don't know what the Soviet Union's innermost plans are. All we can go on is (a) open speeches by Soviet leaders from Lenin to Brezhnev, which persistently talk of establishing world socialism and the inevitability of capitalism's defeat; and (b) the actual, concrete, objective, historical examples of Eastern Europe and Afghanistan. As for "Finlandized", can it really have escaped Ignatieff's attention that this word derives from a real-life case, that of Finland? If the Soviet Union wishes to be viewed with less hostility by those of us in Western Europe with our eyes and ears open and our faculties alert, it might consider dropping its ideological commitment to "world revolution" and withdrawing from its satrapies in the eastern half of our continent. It is surely also reasonable to say that devouring Western Europe would be in its interests; further, that its capability to do so would be enhanced by the triumph of the "peace" movement's policy in Western Europe.

Ignatieff's sentence "Nor does he [Glucksman] justify his claim that the European peace movement is prepared to surrender Europe's freedom to the menaces of Soviet weaponry" is staggering. Had he been forced to "justify" such self-evident observations the book would have been, not 332 pages, but 3,320 pages long. Perhaps I can explain: since the "European peace movement" (there are several actually, but let that pass) usually proppes unilateral nuclear disarmament and the Soviet Union (whose peace movement is negligible) does not, a degree of defencelessness on the part of Western Europe in the face of Soviet power is necessarily entailed. Our peace movement ultimately depends on Soviet benevolence for the implementation of its programme. It is, in short, a policy of appeasement, such as failed against Hitler. If that isn't preparing to surrender Europe's freedom to the menaces of Soviet weaponry I don't know what is.

Ignatieff appears to lack the intellectual training which would enable him to distinguish between necessary and sufficient conditions. Support for Cruise and Pershing missiles could be a necessary condition of improved freedom in Eastern Europe or Afghanistan but not a sufficient one. Ignatieff's remarks on Cold War sermonizing would have been more persuasive before the experiment with détente in the 1970s, and the manifest refusal of the Soviet Union to keep any items on its side of the bargain which happened not to suit it. I would argue that it is quite possible that a Cold War is a better relationship to have with an expansionist power in thrall to a messianic ideology than a misleadingly cosy relationship which tells the West into false security. I do not assert that unequivocally; I merely ask you to consider it.

Finally, to Ignatieff's last paragraph, in which he credits the "peace" movement with having demonstrated three propositions: "I would add a fourth: as long as Western Europe is too parsimonious and divided to weld its own defence together it is going to have to swallow Americans and Russians talking over its head." CHARLES MOSLEY, Women and Families for Defence, 1 Lincoln's Inn Fields, London WC2.

The Whitfield Prize for 1983 has been won by Peter Clark with his study *The English Ale-house: a social history 1200-1830* (Longman). The prize is awarded annually by the Royal Historical Society for the best work of English or Welsh history submitted by an author under forty years of age.

'A New Mimesis'

Sir, – Laurence Lerner (Letters, May 25) writes as if the "meaning" of a Shakespearean play were a single, static and coherent entity, capable of being quarried from within it by a diligent and sensitive critic. He assumes that to deny this creates an infinite regress in which any text can mean anything. My point is less apocalyptic. No text means by itself. We make texts mean, and the positions from which we do so constitute a major aspect of the meanings we produce. There is a complex sense in which, in the case of Shakespeare's plays, our culture can be said to mean by them. To deny that those plays function as an important arena in which opposed social and political forces compete to construct and promote meaning is to deny that they exist within, and as part of, history. That is why any argument which appeals to the text "itself", beyond and untroubled by such competition, denies. But there is no essential text "itself" – able to be plucked from the historical context which defines and brings it to our attention – any more than there can be that unchanging "reality itself" on which A. D. Nuttall fondly grounds his case. Of course, the curious persistence in Sussex of a pious faith in the reverse remains part of a developing English "text" and thus, as Lerner speculates, an interesting aspect of the current struggle for meaning which has now become so overt in British society.

TERENCE HAWKES, Department of English, University College, Cardiff.

Sir, – In Terence Hawkes's review of A. D. Nuttall's *A New Mimesis* (May 11), the "patronizing critical smile" cited in Nuttall's book is much in evidence. Nuttall's sin, of course, is to have rebelled against the up-and-coming orthodoxy represented by Hawkes, and to have used his subtlety and erudition to take the side of those "naïve" students who are likely, as *A New Mimesis* points out, to be "put down", in the seminars of the sophisticated, should they start to talk of "characters" as if they were real.

Hawkes trots out the stock charge of the "advanced" critic: that Nuttall asserts "an eternal nature, inhabited by timeless human beings". To fact Nuttall points out that in 1942, C. S. Lewis, well before Barthes, rejected the notion of "the Unchanging Human Heart". And *A New Mimesis* suggests that Shakespeare's plays explore – offer probable representations of – historical changes that also involve changes in "human nature".

"How, finally, can we tell the truth from the mediating commentary that costrains it?" asks Hawkes, with world-weary sophistication. But if we cannot do so, we have no grounds for choosing one "truth" rather than another; no grounds, for example, for the socialism to which Hawkes no doubt inclines. As Nuttall says in his conclusion, his book is "logically conservative", but "without such conservatism socialism itself is baseless".

And since Hawkes is fond of apotting the "significat erasure", or omission, in Nuttall's text, let me point to one of his own. His review makes no mention of the fact that, on page 11 of *A New Mimesis*, Nuttall quotes from an author whom he charges with "flat contradiction" and "inconsequence". The author's name? Terence Hawkes.

NICHOLAS TREDELL, 7 Donegal Court, Pembury Road, Langney, Eastbourne, Sussex.

Georg Trakl

Sir, – Catriella Schallenberg (Letters, May 25) is being careless when she says that I claimed Georg Trakl for Germany (April 27), or referred to him as "a poet with typically German qualities". My words, already in dissociative inverted commas, were "typically Germanic", and they were used in an impersonal construction whose implicit subject was a superstitious and foreign view of certain incidents from his life. It was not me talking about Trakl as a poet.

My characterization of Trakl's speech as "cold, undignified, unhuman" does not constitute "negative criticism" in my view – nor, I hope, in that of any attentive reader of my piece, or of Trakl. Such a description does not

of course, exclude the possibility that the speech may not also be beautiful – or even darkly beautiful. As for the charge that I have discouraged English readers, that was far from being my intention: I had hoped to make him attractive.

And if writing about the decay of the Habsburg Empire is to become an issue, then let me urge English readers to seek for that in its locus classicus, in the Austrian novelist Joseph Roth, who made it his only subject, treated it tirelessly and explicitly, with grief and passion. In Trakl, it is there as atmosphere, distant and refracted, an inerrable background and macrocosm for his own shifting personal mythologies and sceneries.

MICHAEL HOFMANN, 71 Matern Road, London NW6.

A Dryden Metaphor

Sir, – Was J. Dryden's coining metaphor quite so inept as John Barnard and Paul Hammond suggest in their article (May 25)? The production of gold and silver coin by milling, that is with a screw press instead of a hammer and anvil dies, only effectively commenced in the early 1660s. The great bulk of coin circulating during the time of Busby at Westminster was hammered. Old hammered coin presented numerous difficulties to its users but impurity of metal was not one of them. It might be clipped, worn or deliberately sweated so as to be underweight but for a hundred years it had not been debased.

But to turn hammered coin into neatly milled pieces a melting-pot was necessary. "Refined" covers the process of tidying up better than does "smelted", say, and it makes good poetry.

DAVID YONGE, Dutch Cottage, Compton, Winchester, Hampshire.

William Carlos Williams

Sir, – Presenting a brilliant and original taxonomy of William Carlos Williams's speech in poetry, Hugh Kenner (April 27) notes that when Williams speaks of daisies, "Those aren't Chaucerian daisies, but the large coarse flowers that . . . abound in untitled American land. . . ." Seeing this perennial issue of our land once again in bloom "by roadsides, in pastures" and in print, I wonder if this species is so much tougher than, as Professor Kenner implies, its pansyish "Chaucerian" cousin. Might not this particular strain of "large coarse" daisies "that abound in untitled America even be a romantic hybrid of the great poet and critic?"

CHARLES CANTALUPO, RD #4, Box 4366, Pottsville, Pennsylvania 17901.

A. R. Ammons

Sir, – In a quotation from A. R. Ammons's poem "Scribbles" given by David Lehman (May 25), the poet has made the mistake that not only poets often make of referring to the bee collected nectar as "be". No male bee collects nectar or pollen; it is all done by females.

DOROTHY DALTON, 3 Hooks Hill Road, Sheringham, Norfolk.

Henry Purcell

Sir, – A review of one of our books, *Henry Purcell, 1659-1695: His life and times* by Franklin B. Zimmerman (Poverbooks, March 23) noted that the University of Pennsylvania Press attributed to the TLS a glowing statement about the book which never actually appeared in your publication. Naturally, this caused us some concern as we certainly do not deliberately practise false publicity. I wish to apologize for what I've discovered was clearly our mistake, although a quite innocent one.

A search through our university library's microfiche files; however, has turned up the true source of the review, *The Times Educational Supplement* for August 4, 1967, which does indeed contain the remarks we attributed to the TLS.

ANNE GOLDBLATT, University of Pennsylvania Press, 3933 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19104.

Basil Blackwell

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COMMENTARY

A complicitous confection

Michael Tanner

CLAUDIO MONTEVERDI
L'Incoronazione di Poppea
Glyndebourne

Monteverdi's last and greatest opera is also one of the masterworks of the repertoire. That this is no longer a contentious claim is in large measure due to Raymond Leppard's edition of 1962, which was staged at Glyndebourne in that and the following two years, in a brilliantly economical and intelligent production by Günther Rennert. That edition has been performed world-wide, and has even become a star vehicle, most impressively at the Paris Opéra for Jon Vickers, Gwyneth Jones, Christa Ludwig and Nicolai Ghiaurov (available in a "private" recording). It has also, and inevitably, drawn a great deal of musicalological and critical scorn for its instrumental and harmonic lushness, its changes of vocal register, most notably in the case of Nerone, whom Leppard has turned into a tenor from a castrato, and its cavalier cutting of a third of the work, painful from both a musical and dramatic standpoint. Since Busenello provided his composer with a libretto as witty, fearless and compelling as any ever written. Comparisons with Stokowski's manhandling of Bach have often been made. And there have been several recordings, notably of editions by Alan Curtis and Nikolaus Harnoncourt, which are more complete and authentic, and which are in many respects wonderfully convincing.

For this new production Leppard has come up with what is described as "a revised version of the edition realized in 1962", and in an article in the expensive programme-book he steps forth in the implausible guise of a neo-Spenglerian philosopher of culture, brooding darkly on contemporary shibboleths. Insisting that "[music] is not a refuge; but it can show us that life is still wonderful and well worth the attempt at living it fruitfully now, at the present time", and stressing the incompatibility of two ways of life: "that of the creative performer and that of the academic", the first being a matter of "doing, a positive activity based on the giving of the human spirit", while the second is "a negative way, a don't do it, don't say it until you are sure you are unassailable".

What are the consequences of this change of heart, as Leppard admits it to be, for his revised version of *Poppea*? Much smaller than one is led to expect, must be the answer, and what there are are not for the better. In almost every respect the new version is decisively inferior to that of twenty years ago. Not that that means that Leppard shouldn't have revised it, but that the job he has done is half-hearted, lacking in the personal conviction which his article advertises ("Like a love affair"). On the BBC programme, *Kaleidoscope*, Leppard said "It won't sound like Brahms any longer", but if it previously sounded like a Brahms sextet,

now it sounds like a Brahms quintet. Actually it's never sounded much like either, but it is still lush – and appealingly so: the huge swirls of harpichord tone remain; and there has been no redistribution of vocal parts. True, he has restored the opening scene, as he did at the English National Opera nine years ago. Though not Monteverdi's finest music, it is crucial: each of the three goddesses, Fortuna, Virtù and Amor, claims that she rules the destinies of mankind, and the main action is thus seen as the vindication of Amor, with Fortuna helping her along and Virtù in a state worse than distress. Happily Monteverdi dropped the deities, apart from Amor's incursion at the moment when Ottone is about to kill the sleeping Poppea. Unhappily at Glyndebourne they remain visible throughout, responding with appropriate gestures to the action that is going on beneath them. This is merely distracting, and can't fail to arouse feelings of sympathy for the three actors, unless the point being made is that it is out of boredom that divinities interfere with men – a plausible viewpoint, but not one to be found in the work, and manifestly too intelligent for this production.

Poppea is a brutal work, indeed, as Alan Curtis has written, "above all a scandal". The protagonists are vicious, power-mad sensualists; the spurned Ottavia and Ottone are respectively vindictive and invertebrate, united only in self-pity. Seneca is, as he historically was, a worldly man who is fed up with the world. The other characters are feckless and feather-brained. But little of this emerges in the musical performance, or in the production by Peter Hall. Leppard conducts to a style so determinedly lacking in rhythmic impetus, so contrastlessly *sostenuto*, that musically speaking everything merges into everything else. The performances of twenty years ago were far more incisive. Here even the plangent chorus of Seneca's familiars and the trumpet-accompanied celebration of Poppea's coronation emerge as blond. It is crucial to Monteverdi's conception of *Poppea* that she is both erotically drawn to Nerone and impatiently ambitious to be Empress; here Maria Ewing, by far the most brilliant performer of the evening, is a vulgar courtesan who uses her stunning sexuality only as a means to an end – not entirely surprising, given that Nerone is gross, always half-dressed and sports a heavy punch. Seneca wanders in as a pre-occupation of Pimen, and though Robert Lloyd's performance is characteristically magnificent, it is undermined by the enfeebling production. In adequate performances one is left at the end torn between wishing the evil pair well, thanks to the glorious sensuousness of their duets, especially the last, and being repelled by one's complicity in "the scandal". Here everything is so distanced that one doesn't give a damn about anyone. It is an ear-tickling confection, ideally suited to the public who will be seeing it, but a complete betrayal of the work, and quite a different kind of scandal from that intended by Monteverdi.

AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 177
Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than June 29. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct – in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 177" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on July 6.

1 Upon this ground, a man that is condemned as a Soldier to fight against the enemy, though his Sovereign have Right enough to punish his refusal with death, may nevertheless in many cases refuse, without injustice, as when he substitutes a sufficient Soldier in his place: for in this case he deserteth not the service of the Common-wealth.

2 If the Wars of civilized people are less cruel and destructive than those of savages, the difference arises from the social condition both of States in themselves and in their relations to each other. Out of this social condition and its relations War arises, and by it War is subjected to conditions, is controlled and modified.

3 On such a morning as this
with *The Times* for June the eleventh
Left with coffee and toast
you opened the breakfast-room window

And, sprawled on the southward terrace,
said: "That means war in September."

Competition No 173
Winner: Valeria Thomas

Answers:
1 He felt the tower sway restlessly under the stress of the swinging metal, but there was nothing unusual in the motion; there was no falling of mortar, nothing to attract any special attention. Then he went down into the church, and up again into the organ-loft, whence he could see the wide bow of that late Norman arch which spanned the south transept.

J. Meade Falkner, *The Nebuly Coat*, chapter 19.
2 High in the air above them the cock upon the weathervane stared out over the snow and watched the pinnacles of the tower swing to and fro with a slowly widening sweep as the tall stalk of stone gathered momentum and rocked like a windblown tree beneath his golden feet.

Dorothy L. Sayers, *The Nine Tailors*, chapter 1.
3 Wood and stone no longer swayed subtly. They tumbled so that he was lung sideways, or clung to the ladders like a man climbing a mast at sea. On one side out in the rear, there was a continual break and fall. In the tent of wood at the top of the tower, the floor was deep in broken stone and splinters, in which he scrambled for the foot of the first of the wire ladders.

William Golding, *The Spire*, chapter 9.

Backtracks

Peter Kemp

English Journey
BBC2

In the autumn of 1933, J. B. Priestley travelled round the country to pen "a rambling but truthful account of what one man saw and heard and thought and felt during a journey through England". Fifty years later, BBC Bristol (a city extolled in Priestley's travelogue) commissioned Beryl Bainbridge – "in celebration of Mr Priestley's classic book" – "to follow in his footsteps, recording on film the route that he had taken".

In some ways, Beryl Bainbridge has clear affinities with Priestley. Like him, she is from the industrial North, writes fiction with a fondness for the eccentric, and has a theatrical background: where Priestley periodically refers to his plays, she reminisces about such things as her tap-dancing days with Miss Thelma Bickerstaffe's Tiny Tots Ensemble. Both share a taste for the Dickensian character: Priestley's book teems with them; the liveliest parts of Bainbridge's *English Journey* are those which unearthly curios like Poulette, a topless fire-eater who prides herself on always using lighter-fuel ("it's a better quality flame").

Sometimes, too, there are parallels between what each observes. Priestley regrets the lack of reference to Arnold Bennett in a *Potteries Year Book*; Bainbridge can't find his grave – "The local library thought we meant Alan Bennett and the museum didn't know." Priestley praises Bradford's tradition of hospitality to immigrants; Bainbridge illustrates it with shots of migrants among the mills and turbans in the town hall. Priestley's angrily pitying remarks about the unemployed having to scavenge for sea-coal on the North-East coast ore, Bainbridge shows, still bleakly applicable in 1983.

Mainly though, Priestley's travelogue and Bainbridge's, which also takes the form of a book (158pp. Duckworth/BBC, £7.95, 0 7156 1852 0), seem on very different tracks. It's not just that her travels are briefer, by-passing places – Nottingham, Coventry, Blackpool – to which Priestley devotes copious attention, but that, as she declares, "The very things that Mr Priestley deplored and which in part have been swept away, the huddle of undignified little towns, the drift of smoke, the narrow streets that led from one dreariness to another, were the very things I lamented": so that, for in-

stance, where Priestley execrates Gateshead, "planned by an enemy of the human race to be more exuberant aspects" – she finds it "the only place that hasn't been ruined in its region".

Bainbridge is frank – "as far as I'm concerned, nothing ever changes for the better" about having "so strong a nostalgia for the game that I have never been able to appreciate the present or look to the future". Combined with a distaste for what she sees as over-reverent attitudes to the past (York gets very short shrift), this doesn't make for much breadth of response. It's usually only when in a cemetery or perambulating *Coronation Street*-like communities (or indeed the set of *Coronation Street* itself) that Bainbridge seems on congenial ground.

As with Priestley's, her tour takes her through the ruins of recession: idle workshops, stranded docks, a gutted fish-market. Unlike him, she's also confronted by dismal concrete evidence of a planning boom that misdirected, plastering towns with gimcrack premodern heart-sinking high-rise blocks. True to the Welshman streak in his work, Priestley badly advocates forward-looking communal organization, and also points the finger at what he sees as the villain of the piece: selfish "Victorian individualism" which has greedily vandalized half of the country. Bainbridge, all nostalgia for cobbles and corner-shops, averts her gaze from the future and, when it comes to noting economic trends, seems in a world of her own: "It's funny how in the past competition was regarded as a good thing. Nowadays it's thought to . . . be bad for the character, she declares as if she'd never heard of Margaret Thatcher.

At the end of his book, Priestley offers a summary suggesting that there are three distinct Englands – that of the history books, the industrial North, and the new England of the 1930s with its bungalows, garages and million sports cars. Woolworths and American bars. To each he responds with gusto and in servile tones. Bainbridge's conclusion is far more robust. Her often jaundiced journeyings are in a programme largely overshadowed by anxiety about the arrival of Cruise missiles. At the final page of Priestley's book, he's already not having completed his journey. In the last of Bainbridge's programmes, she's tensing at the prospect of humanity no longer the end of the road.

AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Fleur Adcock's *Selected Poems* and translations from medieval Latin poetry, *The Virgin and the Nightingale*, were published in 1983.

Christopher Barnes is lecturer in Russian at the University of St Andrews.

Vernon Bogdanor is the author of *Much Party Politics and the Constitution* (1983).

Lord Carver's *The Seven Ages of the British Army* has just been published.

A. O. J. Cockshut's books include *The Achievement of Walter Scott* (1969) and *Truth to Life* (1974).

Linda Colley's *In Defence of Oligarchy: The Tory Party 1714-60* was published in 1982.

John Deathridge's *Wagner's Ring* was published in 1978.

Nicholas Denyer is a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge.

Joseph V. Femia is a lecturer in Political Theory and Institutions at the University of Liverpool.

Alastair Fowler is Regius Professor of Rhetoric and English Literature at the University of Edinburgh.

Richard Freeborn's recent books include *Russian Roulette* (1979).

Timothy Garton Ash is the author of *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity 1980-82* (1983).

Henry Gifford's *Pasternak: A Critical Study* was published in 1977.

Sandra M. Gilbert is co-author of *The Madwoman in the Attic: The woman writer and the nineteenth-century literary imagination*.

David Hine is a lecturer in Politics at the University of Newcastle.

Christopher Hitchens is Washington columnist of the *Nation*. His *Cyprus* will be published this month.

Alan Howkins's book about the agricultural workers' unions will be published later this year.

Sir David Hunt edited *Poiphrus in Cyprus: An Illustrated History* (1982).

Robert Layton is the translator of Erik Tawaststjerne's biography of Sibellus, the second volume of which is to appear in 1983.

Hermione Lee is a lecturer in English at the University of York.

Michael Longley's *Selected Poems 1963-1980* was published in 1981.

Patrick McCarthy is the author of *Canis: A critical study of his life and work* (1982).

David McKitterick is an Assistant Librarian at Cambridge University Library.

Derrick Puffett is a Fellow of Wolfson College, Oxford.

Lord Quinton's *Thoughts and Thinkers* was published in 1982.

Stefan Ringbom is Professor of Art History at Abo Akademi, Finland.

Sir Steven Runciman's books include *The White Rajahs* (1960).

E. S. Turner's books include *May It Please Your Lordship* (1971) and *Amazing Grace* (1975).

Joachim Whaley is a Fellow of Robinson College, Cambridge.

John Willmet's *The Winner Years: A cultural and short appeared last year*.

A. N. Wilson's most recent novel is *Scandal* (1983).

The modern sense of tragedy

Oswyn Murray

SOPHOCLES
Antigone
Cottesloe Theatre

Averroes wrote a commentary on Aristotle's *Poetics*; in twelfth-century Muslim Spain the dramatic art was unknown, and his first task was therefore to discover the meaning of those opaque and troubling words *tragodia* and *komodia*. "Every poem and every poetic production is either vituperation or praise"; tragedy is therefore the praise of good men and comedy the abuse of bad men: with this thread he proceeded to unravel the relevance of Aristotle's theory to the traditions of Arab poetry.

We may indeed wonder whether we have not made Averroes' mistake in believing that an event which occurred more than 2,400 years ago is to be understood in the modern sense as a tragedy. This is the challenge a director offers when he puts his characters into modern dress. Most directors indeed hesitate before the final act of *Antigone*, and John Burgess and Peter Gill are no exception. Constantine Trypanis's impeccable translation, both accurate and lyrical, does not lead itself to aggressive modernism, and they set their scene in a Runtanian dictatorship of the 1930s, where Antigone is dragged to her death in a fetching red cocktail dress (scarcely traditional mourning for the bride of death), and the chorus sings of Love unconquered in battle, sleeping in a girl's soft cheeks, in tribes and double-breasted suits as

if attending a Mafia convention. A certain suspension of incredulity is called for, and seems an unnecessary price to pay for such half-hearted modernism. If we are to have a modern *Antigone*, let it be an Irish one, and that would justify the shrill hatred far her society which Jane Lapataire shows.

Only such a gain would compensate for the difficulties created by insistence on modern parallels: it is difficult enough to accept central attitudes in the *Antigone* without having to reconcile them with our own. For instance much is made of Antigone's unwomanly behaviour, and the inappropriateness of such speeches or such actions in a woman, the way they dishonour the world of men. Often this reasoning, attributed to Creon, is thought to expose the hollowness of his position; yet it is in fact the normal Greek attitude, which would have been accepted without question by Sophocles' audience: the paradox lies in a woman being in the right. It is perhaps more significant as an index of his shaky grasp of moral values that Creon is obsessed with the power of money to corrupt man's moral sense.

As it is, Averroes' problem will not go away: is the *Antigone* a play at all? The National Theatre *Orestia* showed triumphantly that an interpretation of Greek tragedy as ritual will fully satisfy a modern audience; and the same point was made for Sophocles long ago in Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex*. Is the *Antigone* not better seen as a ritual act of human sacrifice, in which Sophocles' gods relentlessly demand the blood of three innocent victims for a mistake made in good faith and repented of in time?

The trouble with the modern theatrical read-

ing of *Antigone* is firstly that it focuses our attention on the inadequacies of the play as theatre. Sophocles the dramatic artist knew this, and in his later *Oedipus Tyrannus* used the same dramatic situation to far greater effect. Once again the ambiguous figure of the king, benefactor and tyrant, confronts the power of the gods, and angers their representative Teiresias; once again his destruction follows inevitably. But in the *Oedipus* the dramatic tension is ensured by the fact that the crime was committed long ago in ignorance and cannot be reversed; the outcome of self-inflicted blindness is appropriate to the crime and to the insight that Oedipus has acquired. And in the *Antigone* there is no irrelevant sub-plot of young love, no romantic death-bed anas in the tomb of the beloved, to distract from the tragedy of the hero's fall.

The modern dramatic approach concentrates attention on the conflict between Antigone and Creon, only to misunderstand it as a modern problem. This is in fact no conflict between the individual and the state: Antigone is no freer than Creon, less free indeed, for she is bound by duty to the family and to the gods of the underworld. That is why Sophocles has to argue for her freedom, by creating her *alter ego* Ismene (Vivienne Ritchie), who shows that it is possible to resist the call of duty (and whose assertion of life in this production is perversely symbolized by her wearing a black cocktail dress). But Creon is really free, free to make mistakes, free even to change his mind: "wonders are many and no wonder is greater than man", who rules the earth and makes his cities of law. To portray Creon (Peter Sproule)

as a ranting tyrant is to miss the meaning of the conflict.

The basic dramatic problem of the *Antigone* in fact lies in our uncertainty as to who is the hero. Antigone is right, yet she is sacrificed unnecessarily by gods determined to use her only to humble man. What this production misses is the possibility that the real hero is Creon, struggling to rule a city torn by civil war, deciding that the gods cannot love traitors and murderers and that the community should honour its heroes. Faced with insult and rebellion from those whom he has protected and befriended, he is rejected by his son whom he loves and who loves him: a fine performance by Guy Williams as Haemon and Peter Sproule make this the most moving scene in the play. Creon finds out that he is in the wrong only when he provokes the man of god, Teiresias; he is a reasonable man, his repentance is swift, he will obey the gods and all will be well. But Sophocles' gods do not want repentance, they want blood, and they make sure that their righteous agent Antigone dies nevertheless, so that Haemon can try to kill his father and kill himself, and so that, as Creon laments his fate, they can cause his wife to kill herself, and, as she dies, to curse her husband. They will even make sure that he cannot himself die in turn. So in a final vindictive twist they deny him the right to tragic status and leave him, the wise ruler who knew the ways of men, a despicable sniveller, the ultimate warning to those who trust in the powers of man. Creon and Antigone are equally demanded in sacrifice by the gods as they require us to reject the works of man and prostrate ourselves before the dead.

The anti-Cockney hero

Harold Hobson

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW
Pygmalion
Shaftesbury Theatre

After the acerbity and absorption with defeat of Shaw's *Pygmalion* have been turned into the best-selling smash of *My Fair Lady* it is a bold and commendable feat for the excellent Theatre of Comedy to present the original text, undressed either by music or received ideas, to a popular audience in the huge Shaftesbury Theatre. It is better still that Ray Cooney's production, though over-farced on occasion, shows that the generally accepted academic interpretation of the play is mistaken; and that *Pygmalion* is something quite different from an English version of Ibsen's *Doll's House*. The beautifully muted performance of the last act at the Shaftesbury is quite startling in its demonstration that Eliza Doolittle (Jackie Smith-Wood), in her defiance of Pater O'Toole's Henry Higgins, is not a woman fighting for independence, but a woman fighting against having independence forced upon her. It quietly raises the question what is the social or moral value of independence if this condition of life is something to which someone else is determined not to allow you an alternative; and Cooney's direction answers it in a way that is at once challenging and convincing.

Many of the causes and sentiments expounded by Shaw – such as his devotion to rule by hereditary and unrepresentative monarchs, or his ecstatic delight in the raining of bombs on the civilian population – are unfashionable today. None is more so than that espoused by Higgins, the eloquent, paradoxical, and disconcerting champion of the Queen's English. Rarely before in our history has standard English been so much despised as it now is. A considerable number of actors playing important parts in London theatres cannot speak it. There are theatrical training colleges which no longer teach it. Most people would agree with Basil Cottle's recent approval in these pages of our "escape from the old Oxford-Cambridge-London origin of the standard tongue". The decline of minority languages and dialect is widely lamented. How then can one make a hero of a man who dedicated himself to the destruction of Cockney?

Part set is almost like an extra non-speaking part, demanding to be used. It begs for a play with some thrillerish business to it, where the audience is kept guessing as to exactly what is going on. These expectations are heightened by the fact that the first five minutes or so of the dialogue are almost entirely in Russian. Strange things happen in the two short acts: friendships are strained; trust breaks down; professional jealousies years up the brain;

Pygmalion he is more like a wind-machine. And yet somehow the magic is still there.

It is when Joyce-Carey as Higgins's mother comes into the play half-way through that the true values of the production begin to be seen. Miss Carey lives this *Pygmalion* simply by quietening it down, and she is admirably supported in this by Barbara Murray as Mrs Eynsford Hill. At the famous tea-party the final words of this faded lady, living on the edge of impoverished gentility, are very moving. There is not much that is striking about them, yet her subdued anxiety and desire for a little praise and encouragement, as she thinks of her children, and asks Mrs Higgins, "But the boy is nice, don't you think?" make one catch one's breath.

The depth of quiet emotion displayed by these two actresses comes upon O'Toole and Smith-Wood like a benediction. Their playlog of the final scene, when Eliza leaves Higgins to make her own way in the world, is like peace after stormy seas. Here O'Toole makes one realize that, behind all the bluster and bullying,

Using the old technology

Simon Berry

MICHAEL WILCOX
78 Revolutions
Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh

Michael Wilcox's new play, the third to be premiered by the Traverse, has a spectacular set. It represents a recording studio as used in 1905 for recording sound vibrations on wax-covered zinc seven-inch discs. All the equipment, including a huge all-over megaphone projecting from a black-curtained recording booth and glass bowls containing the etching acid, is assembled by the designer, Dermot Hayes.

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dished and a revolver is melodramatically produced. The expectations, however, are not fulfilled.

The studio is a hotel room in St Petersburg where two young Americans have been sent by their gramophone company to make recordings of the stars of the Imperial Opera. The recordings will be worth a fortune when sold in the West. On the other hand, there is the danger that the Russians (and more particularly the agent Alexei who brings the singers to the recording "studio") will study their new recording technology and then be able to manufacture their own seven-inch records. It is this mutual wariness and mistrust that Wilcox skillfully exploits, giving terse, buttoned-down dialogue to the Americans, and speeches of implausible rhetoric to Alexei (perfectly rendered in this production by Philip Voss).

Among the singers who make their recordings before our eyes are a shifty tenor, who is afraid that his vocal inadequacies will be exposed to the advantage of his rival at the Opera, and an ageing *prima donna* who is eventually coaxed into singing arias by Bellini and Verdi. One of the shortcomings of record-

ing technology then was that a seven-inch disc only allowed two minutes' recording time. By the end of the play war is not sure whether the materialistic Chip has sold out to Alexei; but the other American (Alan, played by Neal Swettenham, who also accompanies the singers on the piano) informs him that the technology will soon be outdated by the coming of the ten-inch disc which allows for three minutes of recording.

The destructive forces that the secrets of the recording-technology engender are not really resolved in *78 Revolutions*. Griselda Grazziano (acted and sung with great dignity by Lee Trevor) makes a plea for mutual trust, but she shows her lack of faith. In Russia's political future and entrusts some volubles to Chip to deposit in a London bank. Wilcox is content to play minor variations on a theme rather than developing it into a major political statement. Peter Lichtenfels's direction is well paced and the audience is agreeably entertained by the singing and acting. But too much is left hanging in the air. Too much unfulfilled potential rests in the set's gleaming brass and black lacquer for a satisfying theatrical experience.

Trying hard to smile

Kingsley Amis

SIMON BRETT (Editor)
The Faber Book of Parodies
383pp. Faber. £8.95 (paperback, £4.25).
0571 131255

Jacket designs are generally so awful these days that it may be best to ignore them whenever possible. This one though, in view of the purported contents of the book it adorns, is definitely menacing. Executed in vulgar-on-purpose style, it shows the kind of false-moustache-false-nose-false-spectacles set – the nose bright red of course – that must at one time have amused people and is offered here, I imagine, as a bit of campy. Inside these covers, it proclaims, are a lot of beggars trying to be funny, going at it all out, in fact. On the book a silly mock-blurb, probably run up by the editor, sends the spirit sinking another notch.

A glance at the first few of these not very white pages brings little alleviation. "The first duty of a parody is to entertain", declares the introduction. Well, yes and no. Yes, the first duty of any piece of writing above the level of a law report or a rule-book is to entertain. And no, the first duty of a parody as distinct from other forms of writing is to remind the reader here and there of the original, the object of parody, whether it be an individual poem or play or novel or an author or style or school. So, for instance, Noël Coward's song "The Stately Homes of England", included here in part (why not in full?), starts off with its two lines of Mrs Hemans and then at once takes off in an altogether new direction. Entertaining indeed, but not a parody.

To be sure, it is hard to care about such niceties in the circumstances. By the time the reader gets to it, just at the half-way mark, he will be so groggy with the drawn-out rubbish he has had to struggle through that he would give almost anything for a smile. The first piece in the text reminds me of an original all right, but since that original is *The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy* I am not entertained. (Anybody who thinks or thought that the *Guide* was

funny or clever or original or in any way interesting is incapable of appreciating Shakespeare. Discuss.)

The second piece is a rather more serious matter. It is a brilliantly clever and faithful parody of Woody Allen – there, I've written the name down and nothing atrocious has happened – by Miles Kingston. With uncanny skill the parodist exactly reproduces the effect of the original, from the initial shock of revulsion and horrified embarrassment, through the burning shame of belonging to the same species as the offender and even sharing his language, down to simple black misery and finally stark fear, fear of a hell with just you and him in it – all this in eight pages of print. I tell you, I was quite drained by the end.

Most of the really dire stuff in this collection is in dramatic form. Not all: a weighty claim to the wooden spoon comes from Cyril Connolly and the nineteen smile-free pages of "Bond Strikes Camp", a first-rate example of a premium lousy idea backed up by evident non-acquaintance with the original, or as much acquaintance as could be gathered by skimming through a review or two of a Fleming novel in a Sunday newspaper. Contenders in verse include an extract (six pages) from "The Sweeney" by so-called Myra Buttle, once thought by some to make T. S. Eliot look silly. Clearly enough now Buttle is the one to look at, grinding grimly through well-known passages and trying to do something funny with every line, something as funny as "Not with a fart but a simper". There are enough short no-goods too, including three by Ezra Pound. He was a real pro: he could be dull and ridiculous at any length.

To resume with the dramatic pieces: for the nadir spot I settled on a thing by Alan Melville, stoutly uninfluenced by the fact that he is dead and his closest rivals, Kenneth Tynan excepted, are not. "Restoration Piece" (eight pages) is billed as a parody of Congreve, but that is just a fiddle. Melville had noticed that in old copies of the works of Congreve among many others the letter S often looks like the letter F, and thought how funny it would be if he threw together any old bawdy-Restoration-

type scene and changed what would have been all the S's not at the ends of words into F's – just that. Actually he missed a couple of dozen or so, but nobody would notice.

Nobody in the theatre, that is. The shadow of that dreadful joyless place hangs heavily over Simon Brett's compilation. Most of the contents of it that are new to hard covers, or to me, belong there, in the theatre. They are not parodies but skits, sketches, turns, taking some existing literary work or personage as a mere departure-point or peg. The results are not enlivening to read, though I can well believe they could help to provide what is known as "a marvellous evening in the theatre", especially when I make allowance for the kind of level of intelligence and sense of humour to be expected of those who go to it frequently, a couple of drinks under the belt and a hefty dose of herd-instinct.

Some of the non-theatrical material is thoroughly worthy though not often new. I feel the time has come to get rid of old war-horses like the eighteenth-century parodies of Milton, Ambrose Philips (who he?) and Shakespeare, though here the writer is reliable about scan-sion at least, which is more than can be said for one of the twentieth-century Shakespeare attempts printed. But everybody could do with a bit of Calverley, J. K. Stephen and J. C. Squire, Lewis Carroll's "Hiawatha's Photographing", Henry Reed's "Chard Whitlow", still the only Eliot parody, and Chesterton's marvellous quintet of variations on Old King Cole, of which the Yests might pass if not for the real thing then for some idiot's serious effort.

Looking for the puzzle

Alastair Fowler

KIT WILLIAMS
The New Kit Williams
Cape. £5.95.
0224 019066

What problem has made men give up their jobs in the hope of solving it? What problem has absorbed the interests of boys, small boys and a professor of medieval literature? There can only be one answer: Kit Williams's *Masquerade*. His new book will be a puzzle to librarians too, since it is untitled: it challenges its reader to discover the intended title and express it to the author without using the written word. The winner is to receive a titled copy within a marvellous "bee-box".

Those who cudgelled their brains over *Masquerade* will have to rack them over this; for it conceals even the puzzles. It consists of fifteen pictures – a *scala naturae* – that tell a half-story or myth of the seasons from spring to autumn. The loosely accompanying text tells other scraps of story, offers poetic evocation of the seasonal cycle (rather more flowerily and with comparatively less astronomy than in *Masquerade*) and contains verse insets, some of them riddles. There are also visual puzzles, such as hidden objects, like the crab in the grass (Cancer: June to July); but these occur sporadically and perhaps only subsidiarily. They will intrigue smaller children, who will be able to track them down like the mouse in *Goodnight Moon*.

One of the artless-artful nature myths is about Spring's labours to speckle eggs and spot ladybirds and feed grubs and "weed" kitchen gardens with vetch. Another, less innocent perhaps, concerns Summer's lloo, whose escape leads to the death of Spring and of the lion's dwarf keeper. (Summer as a rider of the apocalypse "plucked off the dwarfish head and threw it screaming over the mountain tops".) A third follows the bee-keeper Ambrose's god-like treatment of a hive. Obvious themes include the relation between growth and death (do the seasons kill their predecessors or emerge from them?) Continuity in change is particularly insisted on: bees in some form figure in most of the pictures; a mouse in many; and creatures named at one place appear visibly (or hide almost invisibly) in another. Everything is in transition – Ambrose "helf knelt"; his rug begins to leave the horizontal; Spring's dress and "comb" attract real bees; frames become part of the picture; and inanimate things become animate. There is har-

mony (a whole orchestra) even in the last mouth; and out of the strong comes his sweatness.

No multi-art object is likely to be equally impressive in all its elements. Williams's work is scarcely more than adequate (although the pleasurable quirks like "out of the storm the came forth sweetness"). His inset verse is worse. And even the pictures, beautifully printed as they are by Mondadori of Venice and delightful in their Victorian acuity of detail and their modern hyper-realism, cannot compensate for their deficiencies of modelling and perspective. Visually, the finest effect is of the pictures into the marvellous of the frames (which sometimes have inset objects attached metal objects, all meticulously rendered). To ask where the frames begin is to encounter another set of puzzles. But to know the elements separately is inappropriate: this is an art like that of the old emblem, in which the sum was not that of the parts. Similarly, the parts relate obliquely; as when Summer's helmet appears visually only as a jewelled ornament on a frame. The overall complexities of pattern perhaps detract from one another a little, in the manner of knots, but at the same time they may be adding to the effect of the enigma. But I must not give an impression of heavy obscurity: if the form is emblematic and ancient it is also novel and participatory, in the role it invites the reader to play.

It differs sharply from the Victorian puzzle, acrostic or otherwise trivial, whose obscurity ensnared such great minds as Dodgson's. For Williams's puzzle concerns the philosophical, the mythical, even the occult. In this, it refers to an older tradition of puzzling – one that goes back, indeed, to ancient problems and riddles with a serious content, like that of the Sphinx. Renaissance artists took up this tradition in their emblems; making them at once intellectual and focuses of serious meditation (nugae) and focuses of profound (it might be) or simple platitudes. Such puzzles are absorbing in part because they cannot be solved by a single act alone, but must be addressed by a whole mind in readiness for lateral movement. They seem to promise, too, that by "solving" them we would understand more about the world itself.

Williams's new book must be one of the most attractive puzzles ever devised. And the solution? I shall divulge it gladly – but only to the person who in my judgment sends me, care of this journal, the most valuable work of putting the question.

Sorting out the predecessors

Anthony Quinton

ANDERS WEDBERG
A History of Philosophy: Volume Three
From Bolzano to Wittgenstein
343pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £17.50
(paperback, £7.95).
0198246412

On the whole analytic philosophers have been indifferent to the history of philosophy. To the extent that they have pursued it in books and lectures, they have treated its leading figures as labels for doctrines and arguments. A characteristic if uninhibited expression of their point of view is the first sentence of A. J. Ayer's *Language, Truth and Logic*: "The traditional disputes of philosophers are as unwarranted as they are senseless". Despite that, Ayer has written books on Peirce and James, Russell and Moore, Philosophy in the Twentieth Century, and Hume.

There is, of course, the case of Bertrand Russell, who is certainly the best-known and probably the most influential of analytic philosophers and whose *History of Western Philosophy* is no doubt his best-selling and most widely read book. But that, in a number of ways, confirms the original claim rather than counts against it. To start with he wrote the book under some measure of duress. Stuck, early in the war, in the United States and sacked, in his late sixties, from a job at City College in New York, he had to take what he could get and that was an invitation to lecture on the history of philosophy given him by Dr Albert C. Barnes. The book itself is a good read; entertaining, interesting, full of encyclopaedic knowledge, much of it Russell's long-held intellectual property, but much of it, also, got up for the occasion to a hand-to-mouth way. In an attempt to relate philosophy to its setting in the political and social circumstances of its day it is full of general historical matter, attractively expressed but often with negligible relevance to the central topic. All sorts of other odds and ends found their way into the text from Russell's cupboard: a chapter on Byron, an ancient, rather technical piece on Bergson, an almost wholly neo-philosophical survey of the politics and culture of the Italian Renaissance.

In a concluding chapter, which is very modest about his own contributions, he expounds and endorses the "philosophy of logical analysis". One of the merits ascribed to it is its abandonment of the vast, systematic aims of previous philosophy. That is very different from the relation in which Hegel, ultimately the most influential of modern historians of philosophy, saw between his thought and that of his predecessors. They had supplied the brickwork to which he had attached the final, glorious cupola. For Russell, the philosophies of the past were a lot of weeds and thistles which had to be cleared before the proper cultivation of the field could get going.

The same exasperated attitude to the philosophical past is expressed in Hans Reichenbach's *The Rise of Scientific Philosophy*, which is not as historical as its title suggests. Yet there is no necessary connection between analytic philosophy and lack of interest in the history of the subject. Neglect of the past has been a conclusion from two assumptions: one highly questionable – that analytic philosophy has annihilated metaphysics, the other false – that past philosophy consists of the sort of metaphysics analytic philosophy has annihilated. Certainly positivism, the form of analytic philosophy practised by the Vienna Circle, took the elimination of metaphysics to be the first item on its agenda, but other forms of analytic philosophy, as scrupulous as the Vienna Circle in logical rigour and semantic explicitness, in Poland and in Sweden, for example, made no such assumption. Consistently with that, it is a continuing theme of Anders Wedberg's *A History of Philosophy* that large analytic projects, such as the pursuit of the basic components of discourse, imply or presuppose speculative hypotheses about the nature of the world.

Until Wedberg's book, whose three volumes originally appeared in Swedish in 1958, 1959 and 1966, the only general history of philosophy of a strictly analytic character has been C. I. Lewis's *Historical Introduction to Philosophical Thinking*, a bumble and elusive American paperback, which compensates for

its brevity by its lucid concision and the logical explicitness and definiteness with which its arguments are set out. As it happens the English-speaking inquirer has been increasingly well served by the successive volumes of Frederick Copleston's *History of Philosophy*; increasingly, because it got steadily better, after a rather indifferent volume on ancient philosophy, as it got into its stride. As a Thomist, at least in general allegiance, Copleston is committed to standard logic as a canon of rationality. That proves a notable advantage in dealing with such wayward prose poets as Hegel, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, whom he expounds and, as it were, tidies up for appearance in intellectually respectable society with the utmost poise.

It is often said that when analytic philosophers do consider the philosophers of the past they treat them as fellow-members of some timeless senior common-room or seminar. In so far as any reference is made to the special mental circumstances of their times it is only for the purpose of explaining otherwise unaccountable errors. If it is their reflections on intellectual or cognitive matters that are at issue the timeless mode of treatment could be justified by an assumption of the rational unity of mankind, of the universality of conceptions of truth, valid inference, justified belief and so on. That assumption is supported by the obvious intelligibility of Aristotle's logic, the particular arguments from which it was derived and the uses to which it was put, more than two thousand years after it was formulated.

Wedberg, at any rate, says very little about the peculiarities of the past philosophers he discusses, confining himself to the part of their work to which the assumption about rational unity most plausibly applies. "I have concentrated my attention", he says, "on the intellectual problems and theories of the philosophers. The reader who desires to become acquainted with the human beings who had these problems and theories must go elsewhere – likewise the reader who is interested in philosophy as literature or as a cultural force."

His method of dealing with the intellectual problems and theories of past philosophers that he is concerned with is also distinctive. He calls it (he helped in the translation of the book) "prelustration". What that amounts to is the careful extrication of the essential core of the material being studied, its expression in the shortest possible unambiguous form, in terms whose meaning has been made as clear as possible and in an explicitly logically ordered relation to other constituents of the material, with unstated assumptions brought to light and included, where that is needed.

These two features – the intellectual limitation and the pursuit of precision – have stylistic consequences. The text that results approximates to the literary condition of a mathematical treatise of a comparatively talkative sort, not a continuous sequence of deductions like Euclid, that is to say, but prose frequently broken by numbered and indented propositions, often in a logically connected series. That, one might say, is largely a typographical point. But it leads on to style proper. Wedberg's is almost wholly impersonal, unemotional and undecorated, a kind of linguistic track-suit, put on for the sake of rapid and unencumbered movement. It is a style familiar to students of philosophy from Tarski's *Introduction to Logic* and to students of mathematics from many of their textbooks. The whole thing is clinically free from jokes, memorably colourful examples and personal touches: it is, perhaps, the voice of reason.

The allocation of space between the candidates for consideration is as significant in this kind of book as it is in an anthology of verse. Wedberg's decisions are surprising but coherent. The following are given between seventy and thirty-five pages each (in order from the top): the British empiricists; Wittgenstein; Carnap and the Vienna Circle; the pre-Socratics; Plato; Kant; Leibniz; Descartes and Occam; get between thirty and twenty pages each. The whole of medieval philosophy from Augustine to Aquinas is dealt with in fourteen pages; Occam and the *via moderna* get twenty-three. German transcendental philosophy of the post-Kantian sort gets six pages, neo-Platonism two. Duns Scotus/Nietzsche/Hinduism

ger and Sartre are mentioned. Kierkegaard and Dewey do not appear at all.

The same kind of selectivity is shown within the work of the philosophers who are considered. What has become part of a science, questions of value and "deep thoughts" are ruled out as a matter of general policy. That roughly copes with the second and third of Kant's *Critiques* but does not account for the total oblivion that enfolds the *dislectic*, the second, anti-metaphysical half of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Quite a lot of Plato is covered: his cosmology, his theory of science, his view of man, his theory of definition, seen as a corollary of the theory of ideas, and, as the main topic, the theory of ideas itself. But there is nothing about the views about knowledge set out in the *Theaetetus*, although similar material in Bolzano is discussed later.

On the whole the principles of selection employed are consistent and fairly closely adhered to. So also is a principle of concentrating principally on fundamental matters and giving only more or less illustrative attention to their comparatively specific applications. Thus much of the space devoted to British empiricism is given to the empiricist theories of meaning and knowledge. Only Hume's account of causation and the various dealings of Locke, Berkeley and Hume with the problem of our knowledge of the external world are treated at any length. But Wedberg's steady and unrelenting precision, which is only occasionally capacious, could have been profitably applied to a lot of things that do not appear. Fourteen rather clumsy pages assigned to the unperspicuous disentangling of Marx's labour theory of value could have been more usefully filled. (The Marx chapter, it should be said, was added in 1970, a symptom of the mental turbulence of the period.)

In his introduction Wedberg says he has ventured to criticize the views he is discussing to make them "come alive", to bring about a dialogue between the reader and philosophers of the past. There is, inevitably, a critical aspect to the process of "prelustration" as Wedberg conducts it. But general criticism is a bit haphazardly distributed. One philosopher who comes in for a good deal of it is Carnap. Wedberg displays the nearest thing his mode of writing allows to irritation in the face of Carnap's bland insistence that all he is doing is constructing languages whose adoption or rejection is to be determined by their practical advantages as instruments for the scientific description of the world. This "tolerance" of Carnap's is seen, with good reason indeed, as a complacent refusal to admit that the nature of the world determines whether a language will prove advantageous or not. Hostility to this aspect of Carnap, to what could be called ontologically unanchored linguistic construction, leads Wedberg to make too much of the admittedly inadequate account Carnap gives in his *Aufbau* of the nature of the definitions of which that work largely consists.

The hero of the book is the sixth member of the list of ten star performers, from the British empiricists to Plato, given earlier: Bernard

Bolzano. Copleston gives him three sensible pages, in a chapter about early anti-Hegelianism that also covers Fries and Herbart. Russell knew of his existence; there are references to his *Paradoxes of the Infinite* in Russell's *Principles of Mathematics*. But he is not mentioned in the *History of Western Philosophy*. Russell presumably did not know Bolzano's main work, his *Wissenschaftslehre* of 1837. Bolzano was a German-speaking inhabitant of Prague, a Catholic priest, who died in 1848 at the age of sixty-eight. A mathematician and a mathematically-minded philosopher, he spent the last thirty years of his life outside the university in an intellectual environment where there were few to praise and none to understand him. Husserl did something to make his ideas known. There are now two partial translations of his *Wissenschaftslehre* in English, one of them by Jan Berg, a former student of Wedberg's.

This is Wedberg's comment on Bolzano's philosophical style: I know of no earlier and few later philosophical writings which are composed throughout with such clarity and precision, such dialectical acumen and such attention to earlier and contemporary literature. To turn from, for example, Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* to Bolzano's work is like coming from a jungle to an open and well-planned community. Clarity prevails not only in the general organization of the work but also in every detail. Hardly any concept is introduced without a thorough explication with illuminating examples or, whenever possible, a concise definition. Hardly any assertion is made without an account of its reasons for it. Conceivable objections are answered. Throughout Bolzano gives attention to other writers who have dealt with the same topics, whether or not their points of view agree with his own. His prose, disdaining all literary embellishments, advances with a quiet and somewhat heavy matter-of-factness. To read the *Wissenschaftslehre* is also to receive a lesson in intellectual morality.

It is a lesson which Wedberg has tried seriously to take to heart.

Bolzano's gifts are most obvious in the remarkable anticipations to be found in his work, particularly in what he called his "logic of variation", of later developments of great importance in formal logic. The general idea of the logic of variation is that of Frege's quantification theory. In its terms definitions are devised for "analytic" (later to be found in Carnap, Quine and Popper), of "logical consequence" (roughly that of Tarski) and of what he calls "logical measure" (in effect Carnap's range concept of probability). As well as these achievements in logic proper, Wedberg draws attention to Bolzano's Platonic or Fregean semantics of ideas – and propositions-in-themselves, to his refutations of various general forms of scepticism, to his notion of an objective order of truths in which truths are "founded" on other truths and to his broadly corresponding epistemology, in which the psychological relation of "mediation" connects one belief to another. Wedberg makes a very strong case for the view that Bolzano should be acknowledged as the first member of the historically dominant sequence that continues: Frege-Russell-Wittgenstein-Carnap.

If Bolzano is the hero of this history the

Arts Council
OF GREAT BRITAIN

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The Arts Council intends to award a limited number of bursaries and travel grants during 1984/85 to poets, novelists and writers of non-fiction, whose work is of outstanding literary quality and who have had at least one book published. Writers of non-fiction works of literary merit are particularly encouraged to apply.

The bursaries will be given to finance a period of concentrated work on a specific book (including research and, where necessary, travel). The value of the awards will vary according to the individual circumstances of the recipients and the length of time needed. The scheme is open to writers who are resident in England.

Applications will be considered throughout the year, and nominations of suitable candidates are invited from sponsors such as publishers, editors, literary agents or other writers.

Further details and application forms are available from the Literature Department, Arts Council of Great Britain, 105 Piccadilly, London W1V 0AU. Tel: 01-629 9495 ext. 376.

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villains, only briefly observed from a distance, are easy to identify. "From a purely intellectual point of view, the transcendental philosophy meant a dangerous lowering of standards in philosophy, a lowering which in many quarters has not yet been repaired. The lowering concerns... the difference between irresponsible phrase-making and a critical-scientific attitude."

One general virtue ascribed to Bolzano as a philosopher by Wedberg is his resolve to be as clear as possible about the nature of the theses he asserted. In that spirit Wedberg asks whether the empiricists' theory of knowledge is psychology or history of science or a definition of "empirical knowledge" or a methodological recommendation. He puts very much the same question about Frege and about Carnap. In the light of his survey of philosophers' conceptions at various times about the distinction between what they were engaged in and natural science, such as Plato's "dialectic", the universal rational science envisaged by Descartes and Leibniz, the cognitive psychology of the British empiricists, he looks sympathetically on the self-refuting pronouncements on this matter of Wittgenstein: in the *Tractatus* that philosophy is unsayable nonsense, in the *Investigations* the theory that philosophy cannot propound theories.

Presocratic speculations about nature lend themselves well to Wedberg's procedure. Early Greek nature-philosophy is expounded, with its arguments, in a sparklingly clear set of thirteen propositions. He compares Plato's account of the relation of his dialectic to mathematics with the logicist reduction of arithmetic to logic of Frege and Russell. Socrates, Plato and Aristotle in various connected ways are seen as continuous with the analytic philosophy in their innovative examination of the means we use to describe reality. He agrees with Sir Peter Strawson in rejecting Russell's cheeky contention that Aristotle's logic is incorrect in taking "all A are B" to imply "some A are B". Aristotle's syllogistic, he says, is simply a logic of non-empty terms. He takes the Stoics to be the first to draw an explicit distinction between meaning and reference.

The lowest moment in the story he has to tell comes with the neo-Platonists. "The turning-

away of philosophy from empirical reality, which had begun with Socrates, reached its culmination" with this "fantastic mysticism". The very long drawn-out ascent from the abyss begins with Augustine's criticism of the sceptics and has reached a very creditable level by the time of Ockham, who seems second only to Bolzano in Wedberg's esteem. It is with something like enthusiasm that he enumerates the main ingredients of Ockhamite natural science in Oxford and Paris in the fourteenth century: atoms and the void revived, motion defined in terms of time and position, the theory of impetus that anticipates the laws of inertia of Galileo and Newton, the view that speed of fall is a function of time, not mass. All that was lacking was the empirical habits and techniques of observation and measurement which would have supplied these speculations with some solid support.

Descartes and Leibniz get much more attention than Spinoza, whose quasi-geometrical apparatus of axioms, postulates and definitions Wedberg describes as "a philosophical verse form". Pascal is praised for his theory of definition, greatly superior to the vague methodological injunctions of Descartes. But he perceptively compares the urgent personal concern that Descartes reveals in his attempts to repel scepticism to the emotional intensity of Luther. He claims, a little unfairly, that the British empiricists' theory of meaning is "simply asserted". No doubt the reasons offered in support of it are not very good, but, such as they are, they are consistent with the empiricists' declared conception of what they were doing, developing a natural science of the mind. In a tired moment, a fit of temporary intellectual cataract, he criticizes Hume for saying that the mind is a system of perceptions when by his principles he could talk significantly only about perceptions as such.

A comparable captiousness is to be found in an objection Wedberg makes to neutral monism, which is that in interpreting material objects as sets of appearances it has simply replaced one unobservable and problematic thing by another. Admittedly Russell does say that a material thing is the class of its appearances, but, for a neutral monist, or a "category-phenomenalist" like Berkeley, a thing should in fact be seen as the aggregate or total-

ity of its appearances. At one point, indeed, Russell held that sets (classes) are logical constructions. That is questionable enough as it stands. But what Wedberg needs is the even less defensible premise that all logical constructions are sets.

He advances an ingenious argument against Berkeley's claim that our experience could be the same even if everything outside our minds went out of existence. The sum could be said, Wedberg remarks, of the evaporation of everything outside a sphere of radius three feet whose centre is the tip of one's nose.

The accounts of Frege and later philosophers in the analytic tradition are very good. The chapter on Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* is particularly elegant in its patient interpretation and ordering of a work that is "splintered, kaleidoscopic and ambiguous at almost every point". Wedberg does not let himself be unsettled by the book's intellectually unwelcoming features of extreme obscurity and defiant self-contradiction. Russell offers a different problem to the expositor, being clear enough, but, one might say, all over the place. Here again Wedberg's method serves him well. Moore is treated constructively; the later Wittgenstein is made orderly by sticking mainly to the general account of language and meaning of the post-bumous works.

Of the major philosophers treated at length only Kant really escapes him. The notion of the synthetic *a priori* is handled well in general terms, but the involvement of synthetic *a priori* judgments in the process of synthesis proper is left in something like its original darkness. His ignoring of all but the Analytic of the first *Critique* has already been mentioned. He also averts his attention from the Metaphysical Deduction (out of logical fastidiousness, perhaps) and in his discussion of the Transcendental Deduction says nothing of particular "category-ness" or "principles", which figure only at the edge of the programme like elves, ladies of the harem, wizards, Eastern merchants in an opera.

A gloomy note is struck here and there which is in conformity with the vulgar English conception of Sweden. "For anyone who looks for sharply stated problems and closely reasoned arguments", he says of the British empiricists, "... study of their writings turns out to be strenuous work with many dis-

appointments". Of the logical empiricists he says that the belief that theirs is "a self-contained strictly scientific philosophy... has always been a flattering illusion". More misleading still, he says that the attempt of logical empiricism "to give more precise and systematic shape to these ideas... has not led as yet to any more remotely satisfactory result". If he really believed that he would have to shut up about the lies he has in for logical empiricism and so called, and Carnap above all.

This account of the main intellectual and cognitive strand in European philosophy effectively illustrates Wedberg's conviction that analysis is not only compatible with speculation about the nature of the world but has inescapable implications for it. It is that conviction which leads him to recur so often to the question, put about any philosopher he is discussing: just what kind of inquiry is he engaged in? There is an implied diagnosis of the worst of the opposite, positivist, Carnapian view that those who fall into it are led on by logical hostility to religion. Wedberg seems to have been moderately hostile to religion himself, but his idea was to replace the, in his view false (not meaningless) religious picture of the world with a better one. Bolzano, Frege, the philosophy of logical atomism and the *Tractatus* into metaphysics, what then? Wittgenstein, most evidently in the first part of the *Tractatus*, but also in the *Investigations* which Wedberg describes as "leavened" with materialist, behaviourist, naive realist, and anti-metaphysical, and he could be added, more recent philosophers such as Quine and Popper have all rejected the Cartesian pretence of metaphysical virginity, in practice if not always in principle.

Wedberg's *History* is an austere production with only two, possibly three jokes in its eight hundred pages. But although forbidding in a way, it is not overburdened with line symbols. There are a few clementary mathematical symbols, the usual mass of As and Xs and Ys, some diagrams to back up words, but none of the specialized notation of formal logic. In its own terms it is a considerable achievement. It is not for all tastes but those who believe that clarity is worth an effort will be very satisfying.

Choosing rigorously

Patrick McCarthy

VOLEKMAR LAUBER

The Political Economy of France from Pompidou to Mitterrand
270pp. New York: Praeger. \$28.95.
003063 6914

MICHAEL NEWMAN

Socialism and European Unity: The dilemma of the left in Britain and France
292pp. Hurst. Paperback, £6.95.
086245 1043

These books are solid, well-researched studies which help us to understand contemporary France. The first guides us through the economic policies of successive French governments from de Gaulle to the Socialists and explains the background to Mitterrand's decisions. The second, which retraces the Socialist Party's attitude towards the European Community, is especially useful because of the forthcoming European elections.

Volekmar Lauber argues correctly that for de Gaulle industrialization was a means to national grandeur, whereas under Pompidou it became an end in itself. It was left to Giscard d'Estaing to cope with the post-1973 period, when the structural deficiencies of the French economy became apparent. Giscard's oscillation between a mild reformism and the hard, free-market policies of the 1978 Barre Plan brought about his election defeat and gave the Socialists their chance.

In the most interesting chapter of his book Lauber demonstrates that the Socialist Party has been "quite pragmatic" since 1981. During its first year it went for expansion: the increase in purchasing power promised by the Common Programme, the nationalizations which were

designed to remedy the lack of investment by the private sector and more generous social spending. When these duly produced inflation, a steep decline of the franc and an export boom in Germany, the party changed tack. But failure not only brought what may be lasting political unpopularity but seemed to indicate that the European left knew no way of combating the present depression other than by deflation. This left the socialists looking, as Lauber puts it, "a little grey" and has caused heart-searching among left-wingers in other countries.

Yet the resort to austerity, renamed as rigour, in 1982 did not turn the Socialist government into a carbon-copy of Barre or of Thatcher. Despite the wage freeze, cuts in public spending and the emphasis on fighting inflation, Mitterrand has sought both to keep down unemployment by sundry, rather desperate measures, ranging from solidarity contracts to increased vocational training, and to relieve pressure on the lowest-paid by exempting them from the obligatory loans to the government and from the special tax imposed to bail out the social security system. The test of this attempt to soften the impact of the depression will come this year, when massive lay-offs in the steel, coal and other industries seem probable. The recent battle at Talbot-Peugeot was no more than an initial skirmish.

Michael Newman takes us equally carefully through the decades of debate about the European Community which the British Labour Party, the French Communists and the French Socialists have conducted. Although he is scrupulously careful about balancing "national context" factors against the "left" factors, the reader may conclude that the three parties have behaved more as French or British parties than as socialist brethren.

The French Socialists were generally pro-

European in the post-war years when, as a centrist rather than a left-wing party, they formed part of the shifting coalitions that governed the Fourth Republic. Their view was that the war had left France so weak that she could only be rebuilt as part of united Europe. (It was left to the Communists to incarnate the prickly Jacobin patriotism which also marks the French left.) This belief was challenged by the anti-revisionists who flocked into the party when it was revitalized in the 1960s and 70s and, as with the Labour Party, opposition to the EEC was part of a swing to the left. It found expression in the CERES current which, while not advocating withdrawal from the Community, was opposed to such initiatives as the European parliament. Mitterrand himself, however, remained in the older tradition and has always been "a committed European", albeit with Gaullist sympathies.

Newman enables us to understand what may be the most important stand taken by the French Socialists, namely, their decision in March 1983 to continue deflating their economy rather than leave the EMS and resort to temporary measures of protectionism. The

CERES leader, Jean-Pierre Chevènement, left the government, while the prime minister Pierre Mauroy, also in the older tradition, summed up both the dilemma and its resolution: "choosing Europe means choosing rigour".

On England Newman corrects Tom Nairn's view that Labour Party opposition to the EEC is chiefly the result of insularity, although the reader may be struck by the lack of cultural as well as political contact with Continental socialism. Newman makes the interesting suggestion that the development of opposition in the 1970s was an aspect but not the motor of the swing to the left within the party. Anyway the leadership, which had decided, belatedly and unenthusiastically, that it needed Europe, was able, when the party was in power, to control the dissent from the base. From Newman's analysis one might draw the conclusions that Neil Kinnock will have difficulty in drumming up grassroots fervour for the European elections but that, if he ever comes to power, he will tolerate the Community. Shambolic as it may be, the EEC is there and neither the French Socialists nor the Labour Party seem able to do without it.

With a human face

Joseph V. Femia

PAUL PICCONE

Italian Marxism

206pp. University of California Press. £19.95.
0520 047982

An English-language study of Italian Marxism is long overdue, and no one is better qualified to produce such a work than Paul Piccone, a lively scholar who has dedicated his academic career to the subject. But his book is less than comprehensive: it focuses on the predominant neo-Hegelian tradition and overlooks, for example, the important contributions of Della Voipe and Lucio Colletti. Professor Piccone views "Italian Marxism" as Marxism that is distinctively "Italian" in spirit, and not simply as Marxism propagated by Italians. He depicts a Manichaean struggle between a debased, positivistic, materialistic brand of Marxism, on the one hand, and a humanistic, idealistic, "Italian" version, on the other. The former, we are told, is inherently "bourgeois" and repressive; whereas the latter, seeking "a new humanity aware of itself as subject and creator", held out the prospect of true emancipation. Gramsci was the shining exemplar of "Italian Marxism", but it faded with his incarceration and was pretty well eclipsed as a meaningful political doctrine after his death. We are invited to mourn the loss of this inspiring world-view, now replaced by a vulgarized Leninism, embodied in the "social democratic practice" of the Italian Communist Party (PCI).

The first part of the book traces the origins of Italian Marxism to nineteenth-century Neapolitan neo-Hegelianism. In Italy, Piccone observes, neo-Hegelianism was not merely an academic phenomenon; it was the philosophy of the *Risorgimento*, of the fight for universal liberal principles against the particularism and obscurantism of a divided, stultifying Catholic nation. The chief figure in this movement was Bertrando Spaventa, a "critical" Hegelian, who scorned the usual idealistic inclination to transcend the real, and prefigured what were to become vital Gramscian themes: in particular, the leading role of intellectuals in a programme of national rejuvenation. Spaventa's reasoning, Piccone tells us, is brought to its logical conclusion by Antonio Labriola, Italy's first serious Marxist. In opposition to the positivists, he reconstituted Marxism as a "philosophy of praxis", stressing human subjectivity and cultural/ethical renewal.

The Spaventa-Labriola tradition is carried forward by Gramsci and Togliatti. We learn of the personal relationship between the two men, of their neo-Hegelian upbringing and admiration for Croce, and of their respective views on Fascism, the party and the Comintern. The book contends that, after Gramsci's imprisonment in 1926, a profound theoretical divergence developed between him and Togliatti, the new leader of the PCI, who had the

unenviable task of adapting the "philosophy of praxis" to Stalinist realities and translating it into an operational strategy. Gradually abandoning the subjective and messianic dimension of Italian Marxism, Togliatti came to accept an economicist (foreign?) pseudo-Marxism, elevating science, technology, efficiency and organization. Forced by circumstances to appease Stalin (and later, the Cold Warriors), he evolved a bureaucratic and pragmatic conception of socialism, and thus ended up "redefining the communist movement as the defender of bourgeois values that the bourgeoisie itself could no longer defend". The revolutionary element, so prominent in Gramsci, disappeared. In search of legitimacy, however, Togliatti dishonestly portrayed his martyred colleague as a forerunner of the PCI's "de facto social-democratic policy and theory". And so there arose "the myth of Gramsci as a brilliant theoretical footnote to Lenin—or rather, to the Stalinist reconstruction of Lenin", according to which socialism is "a solution to the capitalist problems of production, efficiency, and organization rather than the rise of a new humanity, a new civilization". The Leninist model, then, sees "revolution" as "a mere shift in management". This, rather than the Gramscian heritage, underpins the *via italiana al socialismo*.

Piccone's tale is not so much tragic (his word) as crudely melodramatic. To begin with, why should he assume that a messianic variant of Marxism is more emancipatory than the scientific type? True, the latter leaves little room for individual autonomy and creativity, but Gramsci's expressivist aspiration to "wholeness" is not without its dangers. The totalitarian potential within Gramsci's vision, much debated by commentators, is conveniently ignored by Piccone. Indeed, he paints a distorted picture of Gramsci. It is absurd to assert that the man who wrote the *Prison Notebooks* was a "full-blown" Hegelian (or Crocean). If this were so, why would he have expended so much ink on a fundamental critique of Croce—a critique which receives no discussion in *Italian Marxism*?

Moreover, Piccone nowhere documents his doubtful claim that Gramsci was hostile to technology, economic rationality and the mechanization of labour. Nor does he entertain the possibility that certain Gramscian ideas—cultural hegemony, war of position, absolute historicism—might plausibly support Togliatti's "bourgeois" gradualism. His consideration of Gramsci suffers from apparent (and surprising) ignorance of the recent Anglo-American literature, much of which examines, in great detail, the tricky issues upon which Piccone chooses to make summary pronouncements. Finally, it is necessary to complain about the absence of a bibliography, as well as the abundance of long and distracting footnotes, often full of trivia and unnecessary quotations. While Piccone's book is occasionally stimulating and informative, a truly rigorous, satisfying study of Italian Marxism remains to be written.

Facing the consequences

Nicholas Denyer

PETER VAN INWAGEN

An Essay on Free Will

248pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £18.
019 5246242

Peter van Inwagen holds that the will is free, and from the freedom of the will he wishes to infer that determinism is false. The inference would be unound if free will were compatible with determinism, and so van Inwagen, in the chapter which is the keystone of his book, undertakes to refute those philosophers—the Compatibilists—who have maintained exactly that.

Professor van Inwagen's strategy is to provide three elaborations upon what he calls the Consequence Argument:

If determinism is true, then our acts are the consequences of the laws of nature and events in the remote past. But it is not up to us what went on before we were born, and neither is it up to us what the laws of nature are. Therefore, the consequences of these things (including our present acts) are not up to us.

The three elaborations differ in both vocabulary and formal complexity. The most complex is put in terms of our ability to render propositions false; the least complex speaks of possible worlds, to which we may or may not have access; and the third, of intermediate complexity, uses a modal operator "N", whereby "Np" is an abbreviation for "p, and no one has, or ever had, any choice about whether p".

Not everyone will find all three versions of the Consequence Argument equally to taste. That, however, is the point of van Inwagen's strategy. Your unease at the version you least favour will stem from something unique to that one version rather than from what is common

to them all. And if the Consequence Argument really is flawed, then its flaw should be readily identifiable in one or other of these versions of it.

Will van Inwagen's strategy succeed? That depends on his purpose. If his purpose is simply to show that free will is incompatible with determinism he is, so far as I can see, amply successful. But his purpose cannot be so simple. For if the Consequence Argument does refute compatibilism then one exposition of it suffices; and if it does not then no number of expositions will. Van Inwagen's purpose is not so much to give an abstract refutation of compatibilism as it is to convince compatibilists of their error and persuade them to change. It is less a matter of proving incompatibilism *tout court* than it is of proving incompatibilism *to compatibilists*; and this is something altogether more ambitious.

To convince compatibilists what van Inwagen needs, besides a proof of incompatibilism, is something to take away the grounds on which compatibilism is based. There are the beginnings of this in a later chapter, "Three arguments for compatibilism". The three arguments are those most frequently brought forward by compatibilists, and none seems to survive van Inwagen's patient and thorough examination. Nevertheless, this chapter, and indeed the book as a whole, contains no more than the beginnings of what is needed. For perhaps the strongest motive people have for compatibilism is just the belief that free will and determinism both hold and therefore are mutually consistent. And if the combination of belief in determinism with belief in free will is the real basis of compatibilism, then to persuade compatibilists van Inwagen must nullify not only the three familiar considerations for compatibilism itself, but also those that lead people to embrace determinism.

Here there is a difficulty: it is not clear what those considerations are. Determinism is often deduced with a rapidly and held with a firmness disproportionate to the strength of the reasons cited in its defence. A striking instance of this is the way that so many who write about physicalist theories of the mind either infer from physicalism that the will is unfree (eg Edgar Wilson) or argue on compatibilist grounds that the fact of free will would present no difficulty for physicalism (eg Michael Levin): from the premises that human beings are purely physical these philosophers immediately infer that human beings are deterministic systems.

Now a robust prejudice in favour of determinism may not be irrational, for there need be nothing irrational in maintaining a belief with greater fervour than philosophers would allow is warranted by the arguments that one can marshal. Thus I can cite no reasons that would convince a resolute sceptic, but I am not irrational to believe that the world was in existence more than five minutes ago, and to believe this so firmly that I would reject out of hand anything which gained my state and belief. Whether the prejudice in favour of determinism is rational or not, the extent to which the basis of determinism goes unarticulated by its adherents makes it difficult for one who would persuade them. One can only state and demolish arguments which for all one knows may not be the considerations that in fact engender their belief in determinism.

Van Inwagen will, I fear, succumb to this difficulty. He does formulate and despatch a couple of arguments for determinism. The claim that Science shows determinism to be true is, he points out, bluff; and he demonstrates elegantly that the Principle of Sufficient Reason leads to the collapse of all distinctions

between the necessary and the contingent. He Inwagen's discussion may show, and may persuade some determinists, that the arguments he discusses are not adequate foundations for determinism. But that is all. I doubt that it even touches upon the deeper reasons for belief in determinism, which predominate in days when one might pardonably have thought that Science proves determinism, as indeed it has outlived them. And the Principle of Sufficient Reason, in any version which all determinists might reasonably be expected to accept, is too close to determinism to be of use in refutation, rather than just another formulation of it.

That van Inwagen succumbs to this difficulty is not necessarily to his discredit. It is due more to the greatness of his ambitions than to any lack of philosophical power. Nevertheless, perhaps his attitude to the problem of free will contingencies makes him succumb more easily than he need. This problem regards us as deeply as it regards him, and he expounds what he claims is a solution to it in "a more or less self-contained essay", which "might have been left out of the book with almost no impairment of the argument of the remainder". The contention may however be closer than van Inwagen allows for the very solution he gives—the familiar one that propositions have their truth value timelessly—may itself lie at the back of his determinism. Here is not the space to go into details, but one can infer determinism from van Inwagen's solution in conjunction with Chrysippus' principle that (roughly) "if a true tensed sentence does not express a truth which there is something in the present that makes it do so. Here perhaps is an area that van Inwagen could usefully have explored further. But that is simply to complain that he did not write another book.

The sense of mediation

David Hine

ITALO PIETRA

Mora fu vera gloria?

245pp. Milan: Garzanti. L.15,000.

Politicians whose lives are cut short by assassination can rarely be assessed dispassionately by their contemporaries. The manner of their leaving this world affects judgments of their role within it, and the figure of Aldo Moro, one of postwar Italy's most influential Christian Democrat leaders, is no exception. Six years after his kidnapping and assassination by the Red Brigades, there is hardly a political leader in all Italy who does not pay lip-service to the aura of near-holiness which has grown up around Moro's name. A "statesman", no longer a mere "politician", he is seen as having made the ultimate sacrifice to demonstrate that Italian democracy could stand up to terrorism.

His sacrifice was not in vain. The wave of revulsion that followed his murder marked a turning-point in the fortunes of the Red Brigades. The security services were strengthened, and eventually gained the upper hand.

And if, under the acute stress, his captors extracted letters of poignant bitterness against political colleagues who "abandoned" him by refusing to negotiate, the sacrifice was no less real. Yet the Aldo Moro who, after 1976, coaxed his reluctant party into a working alliance with the Communists, and thereby made himself the prime target of a terrorist strategy designed to make Italy ungovernable, was the same man who, in the 1950s, led a series of governments the immobility of which contributed much to the social tensions that exploded after 1968. At the centre of public life for almost a quarter of a century, Moro was a key figure in the frequently less than glorious history of Christian Democrat rule.

How future historians will judge Moro's career is, thus, an open question, but Italo Pietra, in a frank and readable essay, has laid out the ground-rules for that judgment. His book is as much a résumé of the history of the Republic as a biography of this man. It returns to the well-worked controversies of the recent past: the Tambroni affair in 1960, the mysteries surrounding the political crisis of 1964, and the bitter presidential election of 1971. Moro's role

in these events is described with the impressionistic pen of one of Italy's most accomplished journalists rather than the painstaking analysis of the scholar, and the book is an intricate weave of narrative, anecdote and reflection of a peculiarly Italian kind. But the central question of Moro's personal impact on Italian politics is rarely out of view.

As Pietra argues, the negative interpretation of that impact focuses on the working of the party system. The dominance of Moro's party owed less to its electoral strength than to its unwilling ability to entice other parties, including those on the left, to join it in a coalition which, by its very nature, was so broad it could agree on almost nothing. In the 1960s it was the Socialists who were thus entrapped, in the 1970s the Communists. The result of this latter-day *transformismo* was a legacy of bitterness and mistrust between the parties of the left which has prevented them from coming to power as an alternative to Christian Democracy. For many Italians, this lack of alternation is politically unhealthy and unnatural, and it is Moro, the great exponent of mediation and compromise, who bears a heavy responsibility.

Yet an alternative interpretation of these same facts emerges from Pietra's text with equal forcefulness. Like De Gasperi and Giolitti before him, Moro was acutely aware of the tensions ever present in Italian democracy, of the long-term possibilities for dissolving them, and of the importance of a fine sense of mediation to hold the system together until that could be achieved. To critics on the left, he could reply that if his sometimes meant immobile government, then so be it, for the alternative was far worse. And to critics on the right, for whom Moro was the man who tried to make Communism respectable, he could reply that to do so was a service to Italian democracy. In short, politics in Italy, even more than elsewhere, is the "art of the possible", and Moro's sense of the limits of the possible enabled him to balance the violent forces of Italian politics through many dangerous moments. What Pietra should perhaps have added is that in these two contrasting interpretations there is at stake a judgment less on one political career than on an entire political system. For this reason alone, the debate on the enigma of Aldo Moro, animated by this commendably even-handed assessment, will continue for many years to come.

Between Empire and Reich

Joachim Whaley

THOMAS NIPPERDEY
Deutsche Geschichte 1800-1866
838pp. Munich: Beck. DM68.
3406 09354 X

During the past two decades our knowledge of German history since 1871 has become increasingly detailed. The German national state in its three short-lived incarnations has been the object of passionate scholarly debates. Yet these discussions often rest on insecure foundations; there has been a lack of perspective. In particular, there has been considerable ignorance about the immediate pre-national period of transition between the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire and the creation of the new Reich in 1871. All too often we are fed with clichés—German backwardness, German cosmopolitanism transformed into a violent nationalism, Prussian *Machtpolitik*, the sinister creativity of the enigmatic Bismarck—which have both inhibited interest in the period and hampered any attempt at a balanced long-term view.

The appearance of this remarkable new synthesis should brush away many of the cobwebs. Thomas Nipperdey's account of German history from 1800 to 1866 is a major achievement—a massively detailed but readable analysis of a complex series of events combined with a subtle but lucid portrait of German society and culture. The book's most impressive feature is the extraordinary range of subjects to which it devotes expert discussion. Nipperdey writes with as much grace on economic problems as he does on architecture; his discussion

of art and literature is as illuminating as his analysis of the Prussian constitution; he moves with ease from family structures to Hegelian philosophy.

Indeed in some ways the very range of his interests provides one of the book's few weaknesses. 150 pages on society and the economy are wedged rather curiously between sections on Napoleonic Germany and the Restoration. Nearly 200 pages on "Belief and knowledge, education and art" intrude rather uneasily between the revolutionary crisis of 1847 and the outbreak of revolution in 1848. There seem to be two books here, or two volumes anyway.

These two long interludes are designed to direct the reader's mind to contemplation of the whole period covered by the book. But in a sense they distract too successfully (both are fascinating) from the work's core, the account of the political events of the period. This is a shame, for Nipperdey tells a gripping story in a masterly fashion. The book opens and closes with "revolutions" imposed from above. In 1806 Napoleon dismantled the Holy Roman Empire and replaced it with a more limited federal system which, minus the French domination, provided the basis for the Vienna Settlement in 1815. In 1866 Bismarck divided the German-speaking world into three parts—an enlarged Prussian state north of the Main, an isolated Austria-Hungary in the south, and a group of Catholic states suspicious of Prussia in between. Prussian hegemony was established in North Germany. But its future southward expansion, Nipperdey argues persuasively, was by no means certain. Bismarck himself had severe doubts about the possibility, even the advisability, of further expansion after the defeat of Austria. Hence Nipperdey joins Gordon Craig and others in stressing 1866,

rather than 1871 as the crucial date. In 1866, he argues, everything was still open and uncertain; Bismarck had dramatically altered the power structure in the German states. But no one could have predicted the creation of an empire which united all non-Austrian Germans and which altered the power structure of Europe in 1871.

What was decided in 1866 was the answer to questions posed by Napoleon's "revolution". The dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire once more raised the problem that its very existence had solved for over a thousand years—that of how to keep the centre of Europe fragmented. Napoleon's system inevitably failed when he was defeated in 1815, but Nipperdey argues forcefully that the German Confederation, which was modelled on that system, provided a most satisfactory balance of powers in Germany. Its weakness lay in its inability, or unwillingness, to promote the continuation of the legal and constitutional reforms begun in the Napoleonic period. This domestic inertia was the prime cause of the emergence of liberal critics of the status quo who became convinced that their dream of general reform could only be realized in the creation of a national state: liberty, they believed, was only possible if combined with unity. The liberals tried to implement their ideas in 1848, but the odds were against them from the start. There was no real revolution: the liberals themselves rode reluctantly on a wave of discontent which rapidly subsided once conditions improved. Moreover, neither Prussia nor Austria would accept a liberal proposal; and the European powers also had every interest in restoring the Confederation.

The liberals were not to blame for the failure of 1848. Nipperdey prefers to talk of "tragedy"

rather than of "culpability"—in pointed contrast to those historians who like their history to be written in the language of the clergy. His account of the tension between the political forces for change and the limited real possibilities is both poignant and convincing. And it provides an excellent framework for the stages of his narrative: the success of the conservative reaction in the 1850s; the liberal national revival after 1858; the Prussian constitutional crisis, and the emergence of Bismarck in 1862. The analysis of Bismarck's manipulation of foreign policy to solve the domestic crisis and win over large sections of the opposition makes compulsive reading. The book ends abruptly in 1866 with Prussian victory over Austria and the creation of an enlarged Prussian state in North Germany.

Nipperdey concludes by reflecting that things might have been different. One might object that things weren't different, and that narrative ending in 1871 with a conclusion looking forward to 1914, or possibly beyond, might have been more satisfactory. But the unresolved nature of Nipperdey's account serves an important historical function, and also underlines the major achievement of the book. For he forces us to take seriously developments and options which are all too easily brushed aside as peripheral to the main themes of modern German history. Nipperdey has produced a history of German unification for the 1980s and 1990s and, one suspects, beyond. It is a history for our time, just as the von Treitschke was for his. It is difficult to envisage a serious rival to this book for a considerable time to come. It will be essential reading for anyone aspiring to acquire a insight into the development of modern German society, culture and politics.

Looking over the Wall

Timothy Garton Ash

MARTIN MCCAULEY
The German Democratic Republic Since 1945
282pp. Macmillan. £25.
0333 26219 0

DAVID CHILDS
The GDR: Moscow's German ally
346pp. Allen and Unwin. £18 (paperback, £7.95).
004 3540295

JOHN SANDFORD
The Sword and the Ploughshare:
Autonomous peace initiatives in East Germany.
101pp. Merlin Press / END. £1.95.
0 805936 30 39

Until recently, there was no up-to-date, scholarly introduction to the German Democratic Republic for British students. Now there are two.

Academic stakhanovite Martin McCauley has produced a straightforward chronological account of the history of the GDR from 1945 to 1982. It has 282 pages of which seventy are taken up with an exhaustive chronology. McCauley begins with a startling historical comment: "Poles and Germans shared some common beginnings in 1945. Neither people had liberated itself from fascism." One could say that about the Jews too. But I don't think the Poles, or the Jews saw it quite like that. Elsewhere, he sometimes seems to take the present régime too literally at its word. For example: "Gesellschaftspolitik or societal policy is all embracing and is conducted primarily in the interests of the working class." However, for the most part, the text provides an adequate account of Party and state affairs, with short sub-sections dealing with culture, the economy, foreign policy etc in each period. Occasionally, the author allows himself to show that he knows the country he is describing, as in his introductory observation that most people have learned to speak two languages: one in public for official consumption, the other in private—where they say what they really think. But "this need to disguise one's true feelings engenders cynicism and despair". Of course this "double life" is found in other East European states, but arguably it is, go-

where so perfected as in the GDR. As Dr McCauley points out, the Germans have had long practice—since 1933.

David Childs is much more generous with his personal experience of life in East Germany, and this is one of the elements which make his the more readable and the better book. After a whistle-stop tour from 1945 to the late 1970s, Dr Childs devotes chapters to the Party, the constitution, the economy, education, intellectual life, the mass media, women, defence and security, and foreign affairs. It is an extremely comprehensive, fact-packed short survey, drawing on a wide range of sources for illustration. Two indexes, a short section of bi-

ographical information, many tables and helpful footnotes to each chapter, increase its usefulness.

Childs makes interesting comparisons with the GDR's western and eastern neighbours, contrasting conditions of military service in East and West Germany, for example, and industrial relations in the GDR and Poland. To his credit, he is not afraid of making personal judgments, while indicating the sparseness of the evidence on which they must be made. While quoting the KGB house joke that the GDR is "the 16th Republic of the USSR", he rightly stresses the Germanness of East Germany and the fact that—despite all the régime's

efforts—most East Germans still identify themselves as Germans rather than "GDR citizens". I could have wished that he had voted a little more space to the Honecker régime's recent attempts to gain legitimacy, emphasizing this Germanness: rehabilitation of Frederick the Great, Luther, and even Bismarck.

Both McCauley and Childs stress the increasing role of the GDR's disproportionately large military and security forces, and the illiberal militarization of East German society. McCauley points out that there are now ten military men on the Central Committee and argues that Honecker, with his own military background, is happy to bring such chiefs into the centre of political decision-making. Childs paints a vivid picture of the day-to-day militarization in wall.

Some encouraging critical responses to the militarization are described by John Sandford in his special report for END. This concludes with a snippet of nonsense about "remarkable parallels with the experiences of Western movements" in relations between the state and the authorities. His evidence is a small demonstration against the Western allies' military parade through West Berlin in May 1970 was "violently attacked by the police" and Allied instructions. But what would happen if East Germans who dared to demonstrate publicly against the Soviet military presence? The rest of his report shows that he knows the answer perfectly well. Indeed, he himself rightly warns against the danger of "imperialism" in West European context on East European events. "To talk of the [independent peace movement] suggests a degree of colonialism and organization that is simply not possible and does not exist in the GDR", he remarks, and goes on to give a very full and full account of the autonomous peace movement which has developed, mostly with the protection of the Protestant Churches, in the few years.

In a postscript Sandford gives one example of the kind of thing these young East Germans are up to. On September 1, 1983—the anniversary of the German invasion of Poland—some 100 Polish people rode through Jena with a Polish pennant and bicycle, bearing the words "Solidarity with the Polish people". For this, he was sent to twenty-two months imprisonment.

Icon

In the interests of economy I am not going to tell you what happened between the time when they checked into the hotel

with its acres of tiled bathrooms (but the bidet in theirs was cracked) and the morning two days later when he awoke to find her gone.

After he had read her note and done the brief things he could do he found himself crossing the square to the Orthodox Cathedral.

The dark icon by the door was patched with lumpy silver islands nailed to the Virgin's robes; they looked like flattened-out Monopoly tokens.

he thought: a boot, and something like a heart, and a pair of wings, and something oblong. They were hard to see in the brown light, but he peered at them

for several minutes, leaning over the scarred head of an old woman on her knees there, blocking his view, who prayed and prayed and wouldn't move.

New strategies in the sex war

Sandra M. Gilbert

GERMAINE GREER
Sex and Destiny: The politics of human fertility
469pp. Secker and Warburg. £9.95.
0 436 18801 5

MARY MIDGLEY AND JUDITH HUGHES
Women's Choices: Philosophical problems facing feminism
242pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £12.95 (paperback, £6.95).
0 297 78221 5

GLORIA STEINEM
Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions
370pp. Cape. £8.95.
0 224 02205 9

In "If Men Could Menstruate", a witty essay included in her book *Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions*, Gloria Steinem speculates that if "men could menstruate and women could not... menstruation would become an enviable, boast-worthy, masculine event". Indeed, she observes, the fact of male periodicity would be used to exclude women from all the public positions and privileges that female sexuality has in the past kept them from: "Generals, right wing politicians, and religious fundamentalists would cite menstruation ('menstruation') as proof that only men could serve God and country in combat ('You have to give blood to take blood'), occupy high political office ('Can women be properly fierce without a monthly cycle governed by the planet Mars?'), be priests, ministers, God Himself ('He gave this blood for our sins'), or rabbis ('Without a monthly purge of impurities, women are unclean')."

Exuberantly sardonic, Steinem's comic fantasy nevertheless summarizes the serious battle over sexual mores, manners, and morals that her collection of essays—taken together with Germaine Greer's *Sex and Destiny* and Mary Midgley and Judith Hughes's *Women's Choices*—undertakes to analyze. What are the implications of the female reproductive cycle for human societies around the world? To what extent is it appropriate for modern technology, offering new and diverse methods of contraception and abortion, to intervene in that cycle? How should we feel about nuclear families and about the larger institution Greer calls the "Family"? What are our obligations to children and to their mothers (and do the rights of those two groups conflict)? These are questions to which all four authors address themselves, though often in such strikingly different ways as to offer interesting evidence that what nineteenth-century thinkers called "the Woman Question" remains in our time a vexed and vexing one.

Of the three books, Greer's is at once the most ambitious, the most passionate, and the most problematic. It is a "plea for a new intellectual order" based on changed attitudes towards human fertility and a new respect for cultures other than our own. The feminist-futurist who proclaimed in *The Female Eunuch* (1971) that "the chief means of liberating woman is replacing of compulsiveness and compulsion by the pleasure principle" has now turned her attention to the horrors of imperialism and discovered the values of tradition and the virtues of the Third World.

What is our civilization that we should so blithely propagate its discontents? How can we teach due care for children when we cannot care for our own? Why should we erect the model of recreational sex in the public places of all the world? Who are we to invade the marriage bed of veiled women? Do we dare drive off the matriarch and exterminate the peasantry? Why should we labour to increase life expectancy when we have no time or use for the old? Why should we care more about curbing the increase of the numbers of the poor than they do themselves? Who are we to decide the fate of the earth?

In struggling to answer these questions, Greer makes a number of quite reasonable points, most notably about the presumptuousness, unpleasantness and danger of the mass sterilization, usually in the form of (frequently unwanted) vasectomies and tube-ties, that have been inflicted upon impoverished populations about the cynicism of Western pharmaceutical companies who distribute such "modern" contraceptives as birth control pills and IUDs to people for whom such devices are ill-suited or harmful, or both; about the racism underlying the "family" movement that in

turn underlies the so-called "Population Lobby"; about the intellectual and moral inconsistency of social (and especially "Right to Life") attitudes toward abortion; and about the unnaturalness, even at times inhumanity, of current Western methods of childbirth management.

Documented in painstaking detail, Greer's conclusions sometimes lead to heated diatribes against probably quite well-intentioned reformers (for instance, the early birth-control advocates Marie Stopes and Margaret Sanger). Often, too, they are expressed in an off-puttingly hyperbolic manner—"The whole world is involved in an orgy of cutting and burning human reproductive tissue"—but they are clearly based on a legitimate dislike of Western cultural chauvinism.

Such ethnocentrism is unquestionably to be deplored but the cultural relativism that is Greer's chosen cure has its own problems: like all relativisms it appears to lead—even in her scrupulously planned and researched study—to an abrogation of moral choice; and, almost as serious, it lacks the dispassionateness—the ability to appreciate the achievements of any culture—that is necessary to any truly effective relativism.

These two problems are, of course, intertwined, but it is as well to treat them separately, for the first leads to weaknesses of thought in even the best chapters of *Sex and Destiny*, while the second issues in the work's most problematic chapters. To give a few examples, almost at random: in an excellent discussion of the way "that temple of our religion, the hospital... make[s] a ritual display of its power with horrible results", Greer follows a quotation from Sheila Kitzinger, describing a South African "delivery ward... full of groaning, writhing [Bantu] women" with the statement that "If we turn birth from a climactic personal experience into a personal disaster, it matters little that the result is more likely to be a live child."

Matters little to whom? Surely not to the "native" mother who, as Greer notes elsewhere, may well derive considerable status (as well as moral satisfaction) from the birth of a healthy baby. Earlier in the same chapter, Greer exhibits exactly the kind of presumption for which she (rightly) calls Western doctors to task: recounting the sufferings of Islamic women in a Western-style Algerian hospital, she gratuitously decides that they probably should have been left alone because "Pain was something they had learned to cope with; destruction of their psychic integrity was not." It is hard to believe that anyone who knows how bad twenty-four- or forty-eight, or seventy-two—hours of labour pains can be, especially if something has gone wrong, would agree that a fundamentally "western" concept like "psychic integrity" ought to take priority over life-saving measures, or pain relief, in such situations.

Similarly odd weaknesses mark Greer's conclusion about a number of other crucial issues, the chapter on "Abortion and infanticide", for example, includes the assertion that "Even in terms of Christian morality... abortion kills one and places the life of another in jeopardy, while infanticide (usually the killing of girl babies) may be an ethically sound as well as efficient method of birth control"—even when it means, as Greer at one point explains, the trampling of newborn infants by "blindfolded animals". Some of the omissions and subordinate clauses in *Sex and Destiny* seem almost as significant as its contradictions. The Indian scandal of "bride-burning", for example, which recently came to international attention through the widely publicized trial of a mother and son who had murdered a young wife in her own backyard, receives half a sentence in a book that time and again sentimentalizes the Indian family as the "Family". Clitoridectomy moreover is dismissed as one of a few "quite trivial factors" which may "curtail" the "actual physical pleasure that women experience in sexual intercourse". "The Yonks do practice clitoridectomy upon young women—a fairly off-hand way", admits Greer, in the only sentence that the main text of this long book on "sex and destiny" devotes to a practice which, according to Gloria Steinem and Robin Morgan (in an essay distributed by UNICEF and reprinted in *Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions*), leads to severe genital mutilation and serious health complications, affect-

ing 75 million women in various parts of the world.

No doubt Greer is comparatively insouciant about clitoridectomy (if not "bride-burning") because she has come to the conclusion that Western habits of enjoying clitorises and valuing human life are not only culture-specific but, in the long run, narcissistic. One of her central questions was, remember, "What is our civilization that we should so blithely propagate its discontents?" and it turns out that among the discontents we should not propagate are those with the ideas of velling or segregating women ("women and children are capable of having riotous good fun on their own"), and with the "hierarchy of blood" called the "Family". Indeed, she is intensely nostalgic about the contentment offered us by such institutions as the Harem and the Family. We in the urban West do not like or understand children, she categorically claims, while the placid (if starving) natives of, say, Bangladesh, derive most of their pleasure in life from contemplation of (and "riotous good fun" with)



those thriving infants whom they have not regretfully flung beneath the hooves of blindfolded bullocks.

If Greer's in many ways commendable passions often lead her into excesses of relativism and nostalgia, Mary Midgley and Judith Hughes's *Women's Choices: Philosophical problems facing feminism* continually struggles, in a kind of anti-hyperbole that is the other side of the coin from *Sex and Destiny*, to show that we need only sit upon bonest ground and talk of cabbages and kings in order to discover that everything might soon be All Right.

As they survey key issues like "equal pay for equal work", abortion, wife-beating, rape and sexual harassment, Midgley and Hughes are relentlessly sensible. At times, however, their sweet reasonableness manifests itself as a kind of myopia: counting quite a number of individual trees, they refuse to admit that such a quantity of upright, leafy objects with bark-skinned trunks might add up to a forest. For instance, discussing the feminist linguist Dale Spender's point that "words and indeed clothes... once used for women... cannot afterwards easily be used for men", a point that to many thinkers would seem to support the notion that the female is universally devalued in Western culture, they quote the American literary critic Walter Ong, who argues that "asymmetries of gender usage" result from the fact that "masculinity does not hold the same fears for women that femininity does for men". Thus, they soothingly conclude (without asking "why does 'masculinity' hold so few fears for women?"), that a lot of what we would ordinarily call "sexism"—"the brutal exaltation of a triumphant tyrant"—really "appears in the much more appealing light of a relief to anxiety, and ceases to offend". How it follows that, if male misogyny functions to relieve male anxiety (as, I think, Ong rightly suggests), this makes such behaviour less troublesome for those who must be on the receiving end of it, I fail to understand. Would we, for instance, feel that the assaults of an axe-murderer had "ceased to offend" because we knew that he took up his weapon in order to

"relieve anxiety"? Midgley and Hughes are so eager to defuse what they see as the extravagance of feminist claims that they do not consider such questions; instead, they greet explanations of male turmoil, as opposed to female trouble, with surprise and delight.

After the passion of Greer and the disposition of Midgley and Hughes, it is a relief to turn to the straightforward activism of Gloria Steinem. *Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions*, the first collection of essays by the founding editor of the important American feminist journal *Ms.*, is lively, witty, and modest—which is to say that Steinem is not grandiose; she does not try to prove that whatever is, is right, or that whatever is, is wrong; she does not make large-scale accusations and dire pronouncements or put forward compromises. Presenting herself, quite properly, as someone caught up in an exhilarating process whose end is not yet clear (though its goals are), she has produced a book whose pleasures reside, at least in part, in its author's "negative capability"—in her talent for "being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason". She writes sympathetic profiles of such radically unlike and sometimes (for a feminist) unlikely figures as Alice Walker and Marilyn Monroe, Jackie Onassis and Linda Lovelace; and her pieces on "male menstruation" and female clitoridectomy, along with her analysis of the false parallels drawn by Right-To-Lifeers between abortion clinics and Nazi gas ovens, address specific issues with energy and intelligence.

Sometimes, to be sure, Steinem's journalistic vigour grows wearisome; like so many other lively writers for the mass media, she suffers from what one critic has called "dotulism"—the disease of over-elaborated parallel constructions (her mother was "a woman who... a woman who... a woman who..."). Nevertheless, in the context of theories that, like Greer's, would repudiate many of the important ideas of Western feminism as narcissistic or ethnocentric, or that, like Midgley's and Hughes's, would reject many of the crucial concerns of modern feminism as, somehow, non-existent or nonsensical, Steinem's acts and rebellions reveal a sensible and often selfless concern for all the worlds—first, second and third—in which women must really live.

In this respect, Steinem continues a tradition of lucidly vindicating the rights of women that goes back as far as Mary Wollstonecraft and which was carried forward earlier in our own century by writers like Virginia Woolf and Dora Russell. In "Jason and Medea: Is There a Sex War?", the first chapter of her *Hypatia* (1925), Russell declared that "When I can open my newspaper to-day and read of mothers desperate with hunger, misery, or rage drowning themselves and their children, I cannot bring myself to look upon Medea as some elemental being from a dark and outrageous past". And she answered her own question "Is there a sex war?" with the unequivocal statement that "There has been."

That there has been such a war—and, as Steinem would no doubt insist, there still is—is a point that should not be forgotten by those fighting in the battle of sex. Women and children have not always had "riotous good fun" in the Harem—or anywhere else; clitoridectomies probably aren't any good for anybody; and even if the cause of misogyny is male anxiety, it doesn't follow that misogyny "ceases to offend". We need people like Gloria Steinem—and Dora Russell—to remind us of these truths.

Recent books on women and society include *Women and the Public Sphere: A critique of sociology and politics*, edited by Janet Siltanen and Michelle Stanworth (251pp. Hutchinson. £14.95. 0 09 153450 X), which contains sixteen essays on women in both work-based and electoral politics and *Women and Property: Women as Property* edited by Renée Hirdon (222pp. Croom Helm. £14.95. 0 312 88730 2), which deals with cross-cultural notions of kinship, property and power in relation to women in Islam, Post-Revolutionary China, India and other societies. Penguin Books have recently released *A History of Women's Bodies* by Edward Shorter (398pp. £3.95. 0 14 022518 8). This was first published by Allen Lane in 1983 and was reviewed in the *TLS* on April 29 of that year.

Nibbling at the Nibelungs

Derrick Puffett

PATRICK MCCRELESS
Wagner's "Siegfried": Its drama, history, and music
248pp. UMI Research Press (distributed in the UK by Bowker). £37.75.
08357 1361 X

The title is precise. Patrick McCreless discusses the drama, history and music of *Siegfried* in that order: a chapter called "The Genesis of *Siegfried*" serves as an interlude between two long chapters on the work itself. This seems an odd procedure until one understands the thinking behind it. McCreless does not wish to imply direct causal connections between the history of work and the form it took, as would have been the case had he put the genesis chapter first. Such connections can never be worked out with the precision that can be applied either to a study of historical sources or to an analysis of the music. And the precision he brings to his work, in both the historical and analytical fields, is great: it is rare, in these specialized times, to find a book that shows equal competence in both areas.

For McCreless, *Siegfried* has "perhaps the most complex and fascinating compositional history of any work in the nineteenth century". Wagner's first ideas, both for the individual opera and for the *Ring* as a whole, went back to his Dresden period, beginning in 1842. His prose-sketch for the cycle, *The Nibelung Myth as Plan for a Drama*, was drafted in 1848. *Siegfried* was first projected as *Der junge Siegfried*, the first part of a two-part work (*Siegfrieds Tod*, the second part, later became *Götterdämmerung*); *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre* were not part of the original plan. Wagner's earliest musical ideas for *Siegfried* were written down in 1851. Then came a hiatus, while he wrote his treatise *Oper und Drama* and composed the first two operas of the cycle. Acts I and II of *Siegfried* were not fully composed and orchestrated until 1856-7 (indeed the scoring of Act II had to wait until 1864-5); Act III followed, after the composition of *Tristan* and *Die Meistersinger*, in 1869-71. The work was given its premiere in 1876, as part of the first Bayreuth Festival. McCreless explains all this with remarkable thoroughness; he is particularly good on Wagner's reasons for putting aside the *Ring* in 1857. My only reservation is that, in his references to Wagner's sketches, he is a little too dependent on the work of his thesis supervisor, Robert Bailey. He accepts without qualification Bailey's nomenclature for the sketches, using such terms as "Preliminary Draft" and "Developed Draft", even though these terms have been questioned by the foremost English Wagner scholar, John Deathridge (whose name is absent from the bibliography, one of a number of surprising omissions). McCreless also accepts Bailey's suggestion that the prelude to Act I goes back to the 1851 sketches — an extraordinary state of affairs, if true, for the sketches belong to a different stylistic world. I should have liked to have seen ideas like this questioned — perhaps even criticized — rather than merely taken as gospel.

In the "drama" section, Wagner's dependence on Greek models is made clear, though without reference to the work of Michael Ewans. McCreless contends that *Siegfried's* unique mixture of comedy and tragedy is "at least partially accountable for its lack of success as a separate stage work in comparison with the other operas of the *Ring*"; Wagner himself had hoped it might become his most popular work. Another reason for its uneven quality is Wagner's confused treatment of the motive of fear, which McCreless explores in depth. (Later he explains its purely musical failings more convincingly than any other writer I know.) Finally in this section he deals with the literary sources of *Siegfried*, something that Deryck Cooke, who made an exhaustive study of *Rheingold* and *Walküre* from this point of view, did not live to do; this too is very thorough.

McCreless's discussion of the music is more detailed than that of any previous writer. After a short introductory section he goes through each act in turn, illustrating his points with

diagrams and musical examples. Here again I find he leans too heavily on Bailey, not so much for specific insights as in his general terms of reference. In his introductory section McCreless argues that tonality in the *Ring* involves an interaction of four principles: classical tonic-dominant tonality as defined by Schenker, "associative tonality", "expressive tonality" and "directional tonality". Of these, all except the first are derived from Bailey, though the last can perhaps be equated with the more familiar "progressive tonality". McCreless uses them as alternatives to the Schenkerian model, a reasonable enough approach (though his wish to redefine the Schenkerian concept of "background" in such a way as to "eliminate the linear connotation given to it by Schenker, and express only a harmonic and tonal one"), displays a certain lack of sophistication). But a greater challenge would have been to try to reconcile them with Schenkerian techniques of analysis, that is, to develop a voice-leading model flexible enough to accommodate them. This would necessarily have involved a closer definition of Wagner's tonal usage — which in the end is as much a matter of theory as of analysis. In any case the theoretical issues need fuller consideration than they receive here. Still, McCreless makes many valuable points about tonality in *Siegfried* in general, and his discussion of the individual acts and scenes is sensitive and astute. All in all, then, this is a most useful addition to Wagner studies. Now may we hope for a similar hook on *Götterdämmerung*?

Tones of trauma

John Deathridge

Ligeti in Conversation: With Péter Várnai, Joseph Häußer, Claude Samuel and Himself
140pp. Eulenburg. £6.50.
0903873680
PAUL GRIFFITHS
György Ligeti
128pp. Robson Books. £8.95.
0860312401

"Ligeti" is an inaccurate Hungarian translation of "Auer", the original German name of Ligeti's family. ("Aue" means water meadow and "liget" a small wood.) When Ligeti was five he was deeply impressed by a volume of short stories by the Hungarian novelist Gyula Krúdy. But the book — "quite unsuitable for children" — was given to him "by mistake". As a child Ligeti was afraid of spiders (he still is) and once dreamt that he could not get to his cot "because the whole room was filled with a dense confused tangle of fine filaments". He was caught up in an immense web of shifting forms over which hung "an indescribable sadness... the hopelessness of passing time".

Perhaps *Ligeti in Conversation* is not the psychologist's paradise it seems to be. Certainly, compared with a Boulez or Stockhausen, Ligeti is positively gushing on first acquaintance, gleefully lacing his comments on everything from Greek orthodox hymns to Boris Vian (some of them very perceptive indeed) with choice autobiographical details. The life sounds like the music, of course: vividly traumatic and slightly out of tune. Yet Ligeti's playful scepticism and sense of theatrical effect make his remarks immune to all but the most banal interpretation. "I do not think that we should overestimate the importance of childhood experiences", Ligeti solemnly tells Péter Várnai (his liveliest interviewer) — only to follow the obligatory caveat with a terrifying tale about a sadistic aunt who forced him to collect cobwebs and the irresistible suggestion that the "impenetrable texture of sound" in *Apparitions* (his first major orchestral work) may have something to do with his arachnophobia.

The short interview at the start of Paul Griffiths's monograph is so good that I wish it were longer. Ligeti speaks movingly and without pathos about his formative years in Hungary. Unlike his father and brother he avoided Auschwitz and certain death by "quite a chance", and it was only an extraordinary stroke of luck that enabled him to flee Hungary in 1956. There is little play-acting here, even though the bizarre coincidences and sense of

The continuous creator

Robert Layton

BURNETT JAMES
The Music of Jean Sibelius
174pp. Associated University Presses. £15.95.
0838630707

Few great composers have inspired such extreme responses as Jean Sibelius. Admired in Germany before the First World War and venerated in Britain until America until the late 1950s, he suffered denigration at the hands of the next generation of writers. Such swings of fortune are inevitable, though perhaps only Berlioz, between whom and Sibelius there are many parallels, has prompted equal extremes. Yet Harold Johnson's 1959 study, which led the attack, did little real damage; indeed, without it, Erik Tawaststjerna's monumental biographical project might never have been launched. With its publication Sibelius, for so long a mysterious and shadowy figure, suddenly emerged in a fuller light; and it has dominated new writing in this field for more than two decades. In so far as he has had unrestricted access to all the source material, Tawaststjerna's will remain the most exhaustive study. Lionel Pike's *Beethoven, Sibelius and the Profound Logic* remains the only work on the subject to have been initiated in English during the 1970s.

Burnett James's monograph is one of a series that sets out to explore the sound world of a composer and pinpoint its distinctive characteristics. Sibelius belonged to the first genera-

tion whose work has been more widely disseminated by the gramophone, though not Strauss and Elgar, who did not himself make commercial records. (The one surviving sample of him as a conductor derives from the Finnish Radio Archives and affords a fascinating glimpse of what he must have been like.) This volume offers a well-informed commentary on the extensive Sibelius discography, the pioneering accounts of Kajanus made in the 1930s to the most recent records of Colin Davis and Vladimir Ashkenazy, and here Mr James shows a consistently high quality of judgment.

It is a symphonist that Sibelius made his unique contribution to world music. He possessed a flair for form rare in the twentieth century: his capacity for what one might call an "astronomical" term "continuous creation" is so highly developed that it has few parallels. James concentrates on the symphonies and the tone-poems, and, speaking, he proves a sound and often perceptive guide to them, even if he casts too fresh light. The long years of silence after the Seventh Symphony and *Tapiola* have made many commentators, though Raymond Leck's foreword in this book surely provides an exception. He tells of a post-war visit to the composer when "he gave me a portrait of himself on which, with the help of a ruler to steady his hand, he wrote his signature". This true-made composing burdensome, though it is not in itself resolve the mystery surrounding the Eighth Symphony. During the course of his researches Erik Tawaststjerna discovered a note which Sibelius sent to his copyist in 1931 for the funeral of his friend, the painter Axel Gallén-Kalela, drew on the substance of the symphony and claimed Aino, the composer's widow, endorsed his view. Undoubtedly the musical climate of the 1930s was singularly problematical and debilitating, for Sibelius was hailed in the Anglo-Saxon world as the heir of Beethoven and considered in the country that he had regarded as the musical centre of the world. Perhaps too, he was conscious of the harm he could do to the Sixth and Seventh symphonies and *Tapiola*, if an Eighth fell short of their operatic heights.

What makes this book likable is that, with so much present-day criticism, James shows real enthusiasm and an evident love of the music which far outweighs any shortcomings of style or of focus. He rather underestimates Sibelius as a song composer, though he is unflinching in his praises of *Launois*. The book reads fluently, though the style is at times cold and the spoken rather than the written word is dictated rather than composed. James gives perhaps, too little emphasis to Sibelius's achievement in one respect: that he emerged from a country without a musical identity or any tradition of note. In a world where music is so readily and inexpensively available, it is difficult to grasp how few and precious were those days a provincial outpost of the Russian Empire without an opera of its own and without a permanent orchestra until 1888. The book's high claims that "the relationship between Sibelius's general Scandinavian background and purely Finnish cultural heritage and his musical compositions is also shown in the often from a fresh perspective", a view which would have thought it difficult to sustain.

There are one or two small points. Sibelius was not really "suppressed", as Sibelius himself admitted Ormandy to conduct part of it in the 1950s; he speaks of "Clocks" (Glocken and glockenspiel) in the Fourth Symphony only because the provenance of the Opus 1 songs is known; they were composed in 1913 at the school of Horatio Parker for American schools. Sibelius visited England more than the three times Burnett James asserts, but these visits were not to detract from the general sense of spirit and enthusiasm of the symphonies.

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Listing the Low Countries

David McKitterick

GERARD VAN THIENEN

Incunabula in Dutch Libraries: A census of fifteenth-century printed books in Dutch public collections. Volume One: Catalogue. Volume Two: Indexes and concordances. 698 and 374pp. Nieuwkoop: B. de Graaf. Hfl.350 the set.
90 6004 375 8 and 90 6004 374 X

In 1874 the Librarian of the Royal Library at The Hague, M. F. A. G. Campbell, published his *Annales de la typographie néerlandaise au XV siècle*. Within a matter of days it was dubbed CA by the "savant bibliothécaire" at Cambridge, Campbell's principal foreign correspondent, Henry Bradshaw; with additions and revisions, and with its usefulness extended by the Hellingas' study of printing types in the Low Countries, it is still the standard work. But though its scope embraced the whole of modern Belgium and The Netherlands, it was limited to books actually produced there, and was not concerned with the generality of incunabula. As such, it was the first national bibliography of its kind. Since then (England — until recently — and Spain being principal exceptions) most European countries to which the matter is a concern have chosen to concentrate on a national union catalogue embracing all incunabula within their borders, rather than on a national bibliography. France has been followed by Belgium, Italy, Hungary, Poland and others; Belgium (with *Polain*) thus became the first country to be covered by both kinds of catalogue. The appearance of *Incunabula in Dutch Libraries* is therefore the more welcome because it completes a trio of surveys of a region with characteristics long recognized as having some bibliographical, if not political, unity. CA can now be consulted in conjunction not only with *Polain* but also with *IDL*, as this new catalogue will be known.

The rarity of Dutch incunabula is notorious, and *IDL* makes abundantly clear the fragility of the survival of the printed record for this region. Campbell was frequently able to cite only one copy, and copies of the books printed before 1500 within the modern borders of The Netherlands are in many cases still unique; the absence of references to other union catalogues or catalogues of major libraries confirms the importance of numerous items listed in *IDL*. The dispersal of a series of major

libraries in The Netherlands and in Belgium, in the second half of the nineteenth century, scattered lots of the rarest, and by no means all were gathered into public or local collections. J. W. Holtrop, and Campbell after him, bought actively for the Royal Library, and one or two of the scarcest books at the Enschedé sale in 1867 found their way into the Haarlem Stadsbibliotheek (and so into deposit today in the Frans Hals Museum), but many escaped. Under these circumstances, a modern union catalogue becomes all the more valuable.

Of the nearly ninety libraries covered, by far the most important is the Koninklijke Bibliotheek itself, followed at some distance in quantity by the Museum Meermanno-Westreenianum and the university libraries of Utrecht, Leiden and Amsterdam. Altogether *IDL* lists 4,759 different editions, of which 1,197 have entries in CA and its supplements — something over half the total number of editions known to have been printed in the Low Countries in the fifteenth century. The distribution of these books is instructive. The Royal Library, with a strong acquisitions policy established in the mid-nineteenth century, has naturally concentrated on Low Countries printing, which now accounts for 44 per cent of its holdings. It is a collection entirely different from the more conventionally bibliophilic Meermanno-Westreenianum, or from the university library at Utrecht, each with their heavy sacking of well-known books. But for half a dozen exceptions, all the books from the earliest presses in Italy, long recognized and collected, are in the Meermanno-Westreenianum and the university libraries of Leiden and Utrecht; most of the Hebraica (gathered together in *IDL* at the end of letter H, and so conveniently flouting the alphabet) are in Amsterdam, in either its university library or the library of the Portuguese Jewish community.

Following Goff's model for incunabula in America, descriptions of each book rely heavily on fuller ones published elsewhere. The second volume provides the alternatives and clues to this alphabetical list: indexes of printers, places of printing and publishing, and a general index (going well beyond the equivalent in Goff) that draws together authors, editors and contributors' names in a sequence giving a fuller conspectus of each person's work than is often provided in union catalogues.

The whole process

Geoffrey Naylor

JOHN CARTER and PERCY H. MUIR (Editors)
Printing and the Mind of Man
Second edition revised and enlarged
280pp. Munch: Presaler. DM196.
398004732

The celebrated *Printing and the Mind of Man* display which formed part of the International Printing Machinery and Allied Trades Exhibition (IPEX) in 1963, will long be remembered by those fortunate enough to have seen it, and its reputation has been enhanced by its catalogues. The summary catalogue published at the time of the exhibition remains useful for its descriptions of the additional displays of fine printing at the British Museum and of historical equipment from early type-punches to the latest in photocomposing machinery which were also shown at Paris Court.

The catalogue of the principal, "inspirational", part of the exhibition was extensively revised and published as a substantial folio in 1967, since when it has become a standard reference work. "PMM" citations are common in booksellers' catalogues, and a whole generation of private and institutional collectors has followed in the pioneering footsteps of Maynard Keynes and Ian Fleming and of the Lilly Library, from whose various collections so many of the exhibits were borrowed. The enlarged catalogue has been out of print for some time and commands exaggerated prices. It has now been faithfully reprinted, with no loss of elegance from the original, by the Munich firm of Karl Presler, who also invited Percy Muir to supply some reminiscences of the exhibition by way of introduction.

Muir pays particular tribute to the way in which Stanley Morison's vision and drive inspired the team of compilers and assembled the whole historical appendix to IPEX in a miraculously short time — a process which also owed much to Muir's own administrative ability. Even though the actual compilation was accomplished in about a year, the idea had been fermenting in Morison's mind since the time of the comparable but very short-lived Gutenberg quinqucentenary exhibition held in Cambridge in 1940, for which the catalogue remained as a starting-point for this work in 1962.

The expanded catalogue continues to be a remarkably useful guide to its vast subject, with succinct and deliberately non-technical expositions of the cultural importance of each exhibit, all brought together by a fine prefatory discourse, "Flat Lux", by Professor Denys Hay. The Pressler reprint is furnished with supplementary bibliographical references assembled by Dr Peter Amelung of the Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Stuttgart. These give precise references in recent bibliographies for individual copies of the earlier work discussed, and add references to comparable catalogues, such as the Horblitz exhibition of scientific books at the Grollier Club in 1964; Dr Amelung's addenda do not consistently follow up recent literature on the cultural impact of the texts described; there is thus no reference to Danton on the *Encyclopédie* or to the Barneses on *Meln Kampf*. Although the additional bibliographical notes are, so to speak, a little perfunctory, they are not intrusive, and it is good to know that this fine catalogue is again in print.

These indexes take the volumes out of the realm of the simply enumerative. G. D. Painter long ago showed that the kinds of books issued from the Low Countries presses (particularly in the north) had distinct characteristics. By the time that printing was introduced there, the European trade in printed books was well established. There was no need to print more copies of the standard classical, legal or theological texts, with which the trade was embarrassingly well supplied; but there was an unusually heavy demand for books of devotion, school books and books in the vernacular. This is clear from the bibliographies, and supports other evidence of religious and educational activity in the region. But exactly which books (and which editions) were imported? The existence of German Bibles printed at Cologne significantly reduced demand for Dutch ones: the Old Testament was printed at Delft in 1477, but the complete Bible in Dutch did not appear until 1526, at Antwerp. The absence of one or two usually common authors from the catalogue, and the comparative dearth of Savonarola's numerous tracts, may be remarked. The astonishing number of editions of Donatus' grammar (the vast majority from the mysterious and still anonymous so-called prototypography), the series of works by Thomas à Kempis (gathered, clearly, from very disparate sources) and the scarcity in these pages of foreign editions of the popular (and locally much printed) Andreas de Escobar, each hint at features that will repay further exploration.

Much depends on the history of individual copies, since in the elucidation of the influence of international trade on local production the study of provenance becomes crucial. *IDL* is concerned only with present locations, not with provenances, but it does bring together copies of the same book in different libraries, and so enables some comparisons to be made. The ancient library at Zutphen survives in its old home, with a long series of editions of Justinian. Utrecht Cathedral Library includes several earlier collections. Others are less easy to spot, but it is worth recalling that the university library at Groningen contains books from the old collection at Martiniëkerk and that books from the local houses of the Brothers of the Common Life are to be found at Deventer. None of these earlier collections emerges unambiguously in *IDL*, but the signposts to the books (and to several excellent local catalogues) are now set firmly in place. These two impressive volumes offer the hope of investigation into the fifteenth-century book trade of the northern part of the Low Countries, and the history of libraries then and since, on a scale that has been all but impossible hitherto.

Until the end of June the University Library at Basel has on display an exhibition devoted to book illustration carried out at Basel and in the surrounding Rhine valley in the first part of the sixteenth century. It is accompanied by a magisterial catalogue by Frank Hiernonymus, *Basler Buchillustration 1500-1545*, the second volume in a series entitled *Oberrheinische Buchillustration* published by Universitätsbibliothek Basel (813pp. Sw fr 50. 3 85953 012 7). This catalogue has been in preparation since soon after an exhibition of fifteenth-century illustration at Basel in 1972. "Gibt es Kataloge nur noch klüweise?" quips the author in his foreword, half apologizing for producing so much single-spaced typing. But he has to deal with a period that encompasses the work of Hans Baldung, Urs Graf, Hans Holbein and Conrad Schitt as illustrators, Anders Cratander and Thomas Wolf as printers, and which leads to its climax in the early 1540s with the publication of Leonhart Fuchs's *De historia stirpium* in 1542. Vesalius' *De humani corporis fabrica* in 1543 and Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographia* in 1544. Dr Hiernonymus has brought order in his catalogue to books illustrated by more than one artist, introduced comparative material from over much of Western Europe and, with the help of a wealth of bibliographical references and a comprehensive series of indexes, set book illustration properly in its artistic and literary context. The result is a volume dealing with the very centre of the sixteenth-century European book trade that is at once suggestive and authoritative.

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One week remains for those able to visit the final Centennial exhibition, *Contemporary Fine Printing: Change and Tradition*, which has been open free to the public at The Grollier Club, 47 East 60th Street, New York, the last two months and closes on June 16. In 125 books produced within the past twenty-five years, new processes (including modern refinements of offset lithography, electronic printing and recent applications of gravure, as well as the influence of the computer on design, typesetting, and production) together with notable examples of traditional hand and machine-printed work (commercially produced illustrated volumes among them) are both displayed and explained. Much supplementary material is provided to assist visitors to understand the technical innovations.